THE SAVOY

AN ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY

No. 5 September 1896 Price 2/-

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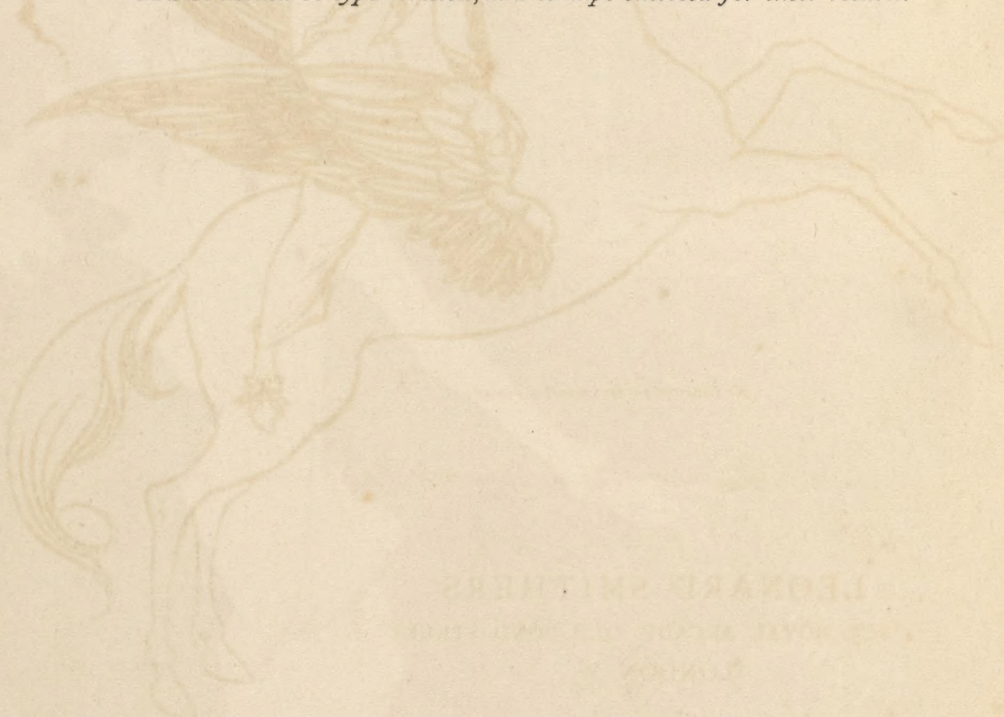

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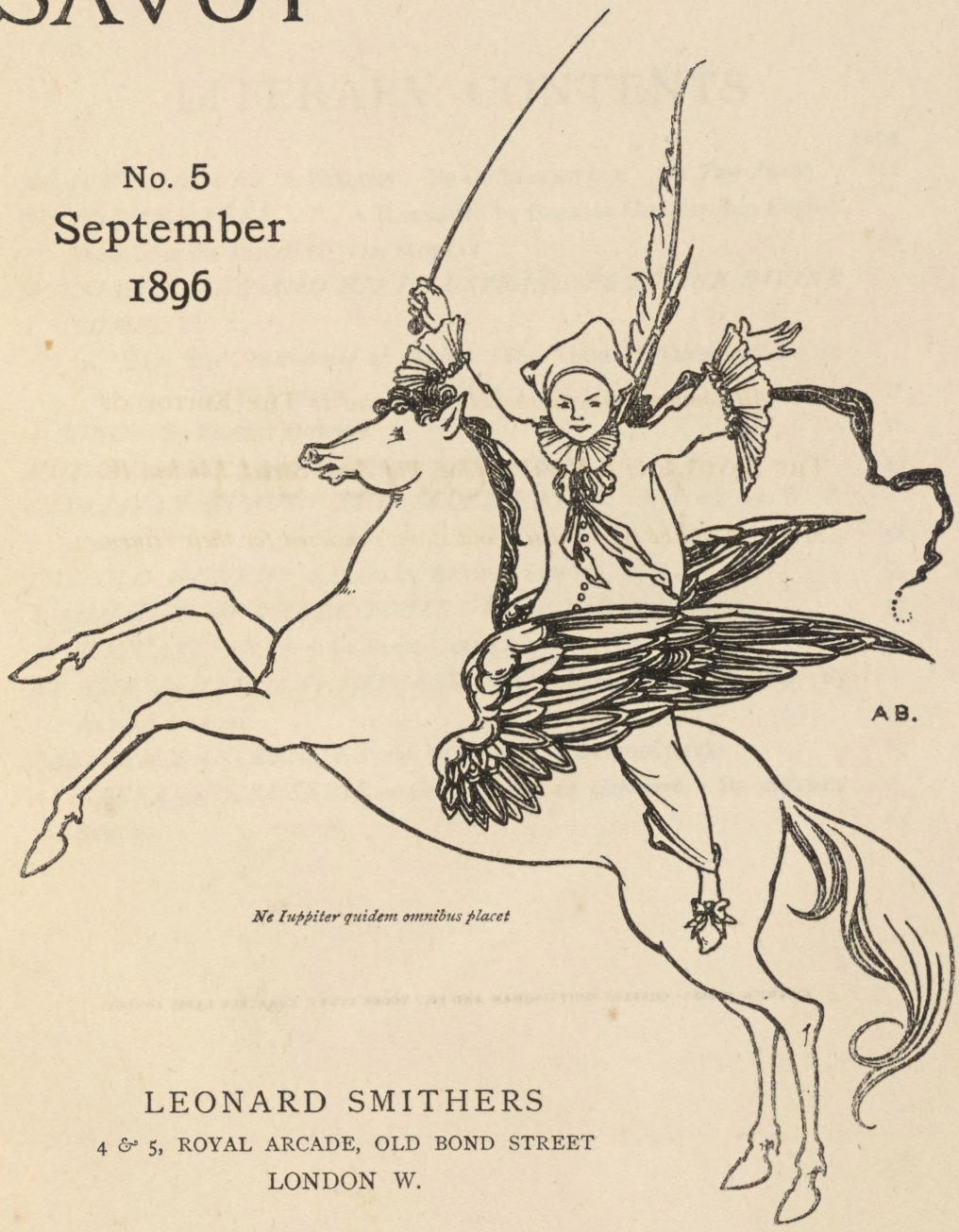

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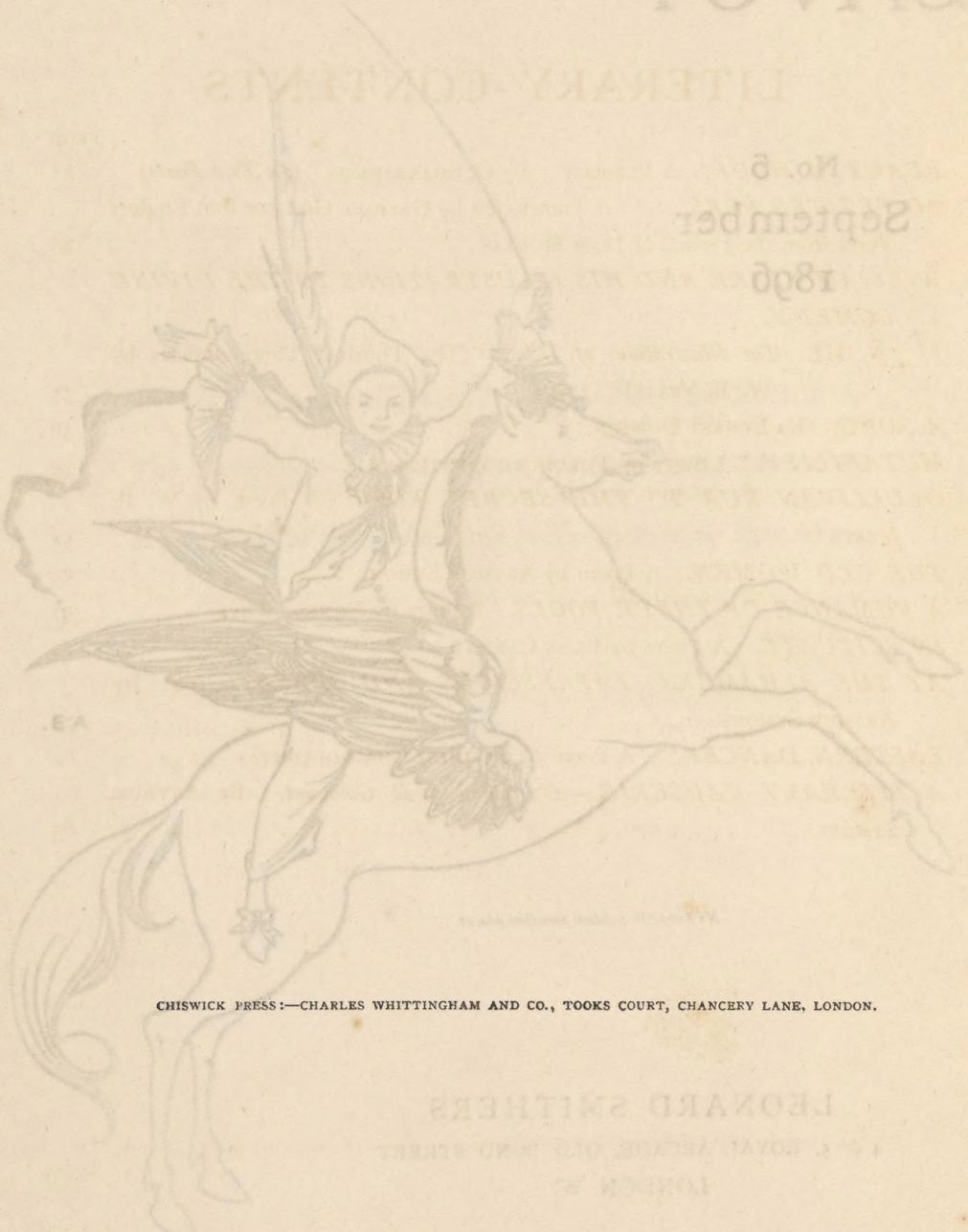

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LITERARY CONTENTS

PAGE

BEAUTY'S HOUR. A Phantasy. By O. SHAKESPEAR. (*In Two Parts*) . 11

"*O PETITES FÉES . . .*" A Translation by GABRIEL GILLETT into English Verse from the French of JEAN MORÉAS 28

WILLIAM BLAKE AND HIS ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE DIVINE COMEDY.

III. *The Illustrations of Dante.* (The Third of Three Articles by W. B. YEATS) 31

A SONG. By ERNEST DOWSON 36

MUTABILITY. A Story by THEODORE WRATISLAW 39

O'SULLIVAN RUA TO THE SECRET ROSE. A Poem by W. B. YEATS 52

THE OLD WOMEN. A Poem by ARTHUR SYMONS 55

A ROMANCE OF THREE FOOLS. A Story by ERNEST RHYS . . 57

IN SCITUATE. A Poem by BLISS CARMAN 70

AT THE ALHAMBRA: IMPRESSIONS AND SENSATIONS. By ARTHUR SYMONS 75

EASTERN DANCERS. A Poem by SAROJINI CHATTOPÂDHYÂY . . 84

A LITERARY CAUSERIE:—On Edmond de Goncourt. By ARTHUR SYMONS 85

ART CONTENTS

PAGE

COVER . . } Designed by AUBREY BEARDSLEY { 1
TITLE PAGE } { 5

LE CHANSON. After a Pen-and-Ink Drawing by A. KAY WOMRATH . . 9

THE CAR OF BEATRICE. After an unpublished Water-Colour Drawing by WILLIAM BLAKE 29

THE CAR OF BEATRICE. After the Drawing by BOTTICELLI . . 33

THE CAR FOLLOWING THE SEVEN CANDLESTICKS. After a Tracing by JOHN LINNELL from an unpublished Drawing by WILLIAM BLAKE 37

THE WOMAN IN WHITE. A Sketch by AUBREY BEARDSLEY . . 53

A DRYAD. After a Pen-and-Ink Drawing by M. DEARMER 73

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BEAUTY'S HOUR

CHAPTER V

THERE was confusion in the Harman's house the next day. I did no work, but sat idly with the girls in their sitting-room, while they talked over the ball. They were full of the new beauty, Miss Hatherley.

"And such an odd thing, Mary. Gerald says she reminds him of you."

"Quite impossible," said I. "But I thank him."

"Something in her voice and way of talking," Betty went on. "You *have* a nice voice, you know. Gerald says she is very original; and goodness knows he had opportunity enough of finding out; he danced with no one else."

I nearly contradicted that statement, but saved myself in time.

"I'm so sorry I couldn't go," I said instead. "Did Miss Sturgis enjoy herself?"

"And are you really better?" said Betty. "You didn't seem ill in the afternoon. As for Bella——"

"Oh, Bella!" interrupted Clara. "Bella had best look to her laurels. No one noticed her while Miss Hatherley was in the room."

I went on with my questions.

"Do you suppose Miss Hatherley enjoyed her success?"

They laughed.

"Why, yes, if she's like other girls."

"Perhaps she isn't. Do all girls enjoy being admired at the expense of some one else?"

Clara looked out of the window, with an assumption of unconsciousness. Betty, who is more candid, answered at once, "One can't help liking it."

I laughed outright.

"Does Miss Hatherley seem nice?" I asked next.

"Charming," said Clara. "We have taken quite a fancy to her. Mother

is writing to-day to ask her to dine and go to the theatre with us to-morrow. That was Gerald's idea."

I received this piece of news in silence.

"Everyone wants to know her," Clara went on. "Dr. Trefusis was overwhelmed with questions and inquiries as to whether people might call, and so on. She paints all day through; works quite hard, as though she had to do it. Odd, isn't it?"

"Why odd?" said I. "I suppose she likes it. But a passion for art is unnecessary in a pretty woman, no doubt." And Betty broke in with, "Oh, there you go again, Mary! Always finding fault with pretty women."

"Not with them, my dear, but with the world," I said, laughing. "You can't say I find fault with you, Betty."

"Oh, I'm not pretty," said she, "by Miss Hatherley."

I was touched by her speech.

"You're a generous creature," I said. "I have always supposed it a mistake to think that one pretty girl is jealous of another."

Betty put her head on one side, and, with an odd mixture of wisdom and drollery, answered:

"Well, we like beauty—and we don't. We like it because it's interesting, and exciting, and successful; and a pretty girl gives one's house a certain reputation. We don't approve when she annexes people who belong to us, naturally; all the same, we can't help feeling she must do as she pleases—she's privileged."

"I had no idea you were so profound," said Clara, a little sharply; and I wondered whether it is possible that women are more tenacious of an intellectual than of a physical superiority.

Betty only laughed.

"I'm off," said she. "I promised to meet the Sturgises in the park; but Gerald won't come, and I'm half afraid to face Bella alone. Good-bye, Mary. We'll ask you to meet Miss Hatherley when we know her better."

When I got home I found that Dr. Trefusis had sent on Lady Harman's letter. I sat over it for some time, thinking; then I wrote and said I would go. Miss Whateley looked at me wistfully when I told her.

"I'm afraid you will get into some trouble, Mary," she said, "and you can't possibly wear the ball dress."

"I must go," I retorted. "I am at last seeing life as a woman ought to see it. I can't give up the privilege; at least not yet."

"You won't give it up till you have paid the penalty," Miss Whateley answered.

I shrugged my shoulders, as though I did not believe her.

"I must have another dress," I cried.

Miss Whateley would have given me the clothes off her back, she said; but as that would not avail me much, she offered to lend me some money. I accepted the offer with a recklessness born of my strange position; and we went out shopping, after sunset; Mary Hatherley and Miss Whateley.

The people in the shops seemed anxious to please me, even when they found that I could afford to pay but little for what I wanted; they probably looked upon me as a good advertisement, and I enjoyed the novelty of being treated with a deferential consideration.

It was a very cold night; as we passed along the freezing, gas-lit streets we met but few people; we had to cross the square in which Dr. Trefusis lived on our way home; I noticed, before we reached his door, that a man in a fur overcoat was pacing slowly up and down the pavement. Why did he linger in such weather? I wondered vaguely. Then I saw it was Gerald Harman. I put my muff up to my face and passed him by. I knew, too well, that he was waiting on the chance of seeing Mary Hatherley on her way home from a day's work at the studio.

"You do not work very late these foggy days, I suppose?" he asked me, tentatively, the next evening at dinner.

"I make gaslight studies," said I, shortly.

"Is it permitted to anybody to go and see you at work?"

"Oh no," I answered, with a smile. "I paint in earnest."

"I waited an hour in Dorchester Square last night," he went on, very low, "in the hope of seeing you."

"That was misplaced heroism," said I, "in such weather. I should advise you not to do it again."

"I shall do it every evening," he declared; and I only laughed a little, as though the subject were not of the remotest interest, and turned to my neighbour.

Gerald sat by me at the play. I went so seldom to the theatre that I was always arrested by the interest of the piece, and of the actors. I sat in the front of the box by Lady Harman; who, I was certain, suffered under the uneasy sensation that she was taking a leap in the dark in encouraging a young unknown woman, with nothing to recommend her but her looks; though, on the other hand, she was upheld by the authoritative voice of society, which had pronounced a favourable verdict on me.

Behind us were Gerald and Betty. It was such an intimate family party that I had great difficulty in not using the familiar tone of every day. When I had only just saved myself from calling Betty by her Christian name, and pointing out an acquaintance of Gerald's, whom I knew by sight, in the stalls, I was sobered.

Silence fell upon me: I was so acutely aware of Gerald's presence, which seemed like a light at which I could not bear to look, that I tried to distract myself by noting the faces of the other people in the house till the curtain should rise. Here and there I caught glimpses of a pretty head; the graceful turn of a neck; an expression of happiness or of vivacity; but the audience was mostly ugly, dull, and uninteresting: yet I felt sorry for all these people; for their inarticulate dumb way of going through life, untouched by passion, save in its baser aspects, and only apprehending the ideal through some conventionalized form of religion, or some dim discontent.

The play was "Romeo and Juliet": the Juliet was beautiful, but she could only look the part; and the young man who acted Romeo was no ideal lover; yet the immortal, golden play of youth and passion drew tears, and quickened heartbeats; for each woman in the house was Juliet, tasting some rapture, perhaps lost, perhaps never realized, of first love.

The curtain dropped: I sat in a dream, and Lady Harman's voice seemed to come from very far away.

"It's a pretty play," she said. "But don't you think it's rather a muddle? I never can make out who is who."

"It doesn't matter," answered Betty. "Don't trouble, mother dear. What a lovely thing it would be for private theatricals, parts of it, that is. Gerald, wouldn't Bella make a good Juliet?"

Her remark might, or might not have been malicious; but Gerald started. "Bella!" he ejaculated, and looked at me. His look said plainly what his lips had not yet dared; no man had ever yet looked at me with entreaty, passion, humility, in his eyes. I looked back at him, the soul of Mary Gower speaking through the eyes of Mary Hatherley. He flushed, and went pale again, and I regretted what I had done. For the rest of the evening I devoted myself to Lady Harman: Gerald seemed lost in thought, and only roused himself when the carriage stopped at Dr. Trefusis' door.

"I shall never see you alone," said he, as we stood on the doorstep. "I cannot talk to you—I must write to you," he ended, with a sort of despairing impatience.

"Do not write," said I: and then the door was opened by the doctor in

person. Gerald seemed hardly able to speak to him ; when a few words had passed he went back abruptly to the carriage.

"Mary," said Dr. Trefusis, "you are a great trouble to me. Now I've got to take you home, and interrupt my studies in Rosenkrantz and the Pope Honorius, most absorbing old impostors—no, I won't say that ; for I'm beginning to think there may be some method in their madness. You have led me into devious paths, Mary Hatherley. By the way, who's that good-looking young fellow ? "

"That's Gerald Harman," said I.

The doctor looked at me with a sort of inquisitive sympathy ; and shrugged his shoulders. When he left me at my own house, "You are playing with fire, my dear," he said ; "and I'm an old fool to help you."

"You are helping me to buy the experience that teaches," I said, "and it teaches bitter lessons enough : don't fear for me."

CHAPTER VI

I had never received a love-letter ; and the only scrap of Gerald Harman's writing that I possessed was a little note, which said :

"Dear Miss Gower, my mother asks me to write and tell you that she will be back to-morrow, and expects you on Thursday as usual. Yours very truly,

"GERALD HARMAN."

I sat comparing this letter, with the letter he had written to Mary Hatherley, and I do not think I have ever known a more miserable moment.

"I ought to begin by asking you to forgive me," the letter ran. "I am afraid of your thinking me too bold in writing ; yet you must know that love comes sometimes in a sort of flash that makes one see life quite differently in a moment. That is what happened to me the first time I ever saw you. Since then I have thought of nothing else. If you would be kind, if you would care what becomes of me, I might be able to make a better thing of life. I have been very idle and useless always, and now I feel ashamed of it. I dare not ask if you could ever care for me—not yet. You know how I love you, and am ever yours

"GERALD HARMAN."

I was sitting in my bedroom, at the little dressing-table which did duty for a writing-table too: I looked again into my own eyes in the glass, as I had done on that memorable evening that seemed such a very long while ago: we knew one another's bitterness, my reflection and I, and laughed aloud.

"Man's love," said I to the face in the glass, "man's humility, man's cry of 'trample on me, and re-mould me,' what does it all amount to? Here am I; the same woman, with two faces; the woman counts for nothing; the face determines my life. A man can only see inspiration in eyes that are beautiful; words can only influence him when the lips that say them have curves and a smile that delight. I, Mary Gower, could love him, could help him, as far as my soul and will go; but he cannot see this: a man sees only with the outer, never with the inner eye."

"Perhaps we are unjust," I went on again presently. "There are, no doubt, men to whom the outside of a woman is not the whole; but they must have learnt discernment, either through some special suffering, or they are perhaps lacking in sensuous instincts, and care but little for women at all, either from the intellectual or the emotional side. Gerald is not one of these; he is like other men; his point of view may be fairly taken as representing a normal one —and he loves Mary Hatherley!"

"Come in," I went on, in answer to a knock at the door. "There's going to be no transformation to-night, Whatty. I'm tired of masquerading; I am very tired of life; I was born too serious. I can't live in the passing hour, and enjoy it; I think of yesterday, and of to-morrow. Why can't I fling all care to the winds and make merry, with the other Mary's beautiful face, and all it brings me!"

Miss Whateley put her hands on my shoulder, and I turned to her, and wept.

I did not answer Gerald's letter; nor did I see him till a few days later, when he strolled into Lady Harman's study in his usual careless way.

"I'm out of sorts, Mary," said he. "Let me sit here, while you talk to me. I like the sound of your voice."

I knew why he liked the sound of my voice, and it hardened me against him.

"Why out of sorts?" said I. "Haven't you eaten, drunk, and been merry? What more does a man want?"

"I've eaten less, drunk considerably more, and not been in the least

merry," he answered. "Just now I wish that I might die—to-morrow, or even to-day."

I looked at him with a sudden pity mixed with my anger—that pity which is at once the root and the flower of love.

"You are unhappy, really?" I asked, knowing that Mary Hatherley had not answered his letter.

"I'm miserable!" he cried out.

Then he began walking up and down the room, and I felt, with a quickening of fear and interest, that he was going to speak to me of her. I yielded then to a strange impulse, which was almost like jealousy of myself.

"What has Bella Sturgis been doing?" said I.

He stopped dead.

"Bella . . . she seems to have drifted a thousand miles away. She belongs to the old life, from which I am cut off: there's a gulf opened between me and it; she is on the other side."

"I don't understand, then," said I.

"O Mary," Gerald cried, "I'm very hard hit this time! Haven't you heard of Mary Hatherley?"

"Tell me about her," I said.

There was a great fire in the room, and I sat close to it; but my hands were like ice. Gerald leant against the mantelpiece, and looked down on me. He was full of that intoxicating spirit of youth and enthusiasm, which carries such an irresistible appeal to those whose own youth is clouded, and who cannot rise above a resigned cheerfulness. Even now, when he declared himself to be miserable, there was an ardour in his discouragement which made it almost a desirable emotion.

"Mary Hatherley," he began, "reminds me in some strange way of you: she says things so like what you say, and the very voice is like."

"But she's very lovely," I interposed. "And you've fallen seriously in love at last?"

He did not resent my remark.

"Seriously—at last," he answered, with a smile.

"Why have you never fallen in love with me?" I asked then.

He began to laugh, with genuine amusement.

"You're an amazing person," said he; "I shall, if you're not careful."

"Well, but why not?" I persisted. "It's true that I am only your mother's secretary, but you say I'm like Miss Hatherley in my ideas and way of talking. Is it the face that makes the difference?"

"I know you are following up something infernally abstruse," said he, "that has no relation to the facts of life; that's so like you. I daresay the face *does* make a difference: it make a difference in the whole personality."

"I wanted to find out the facts," said I. "And you have given me a fairly direct answer, which can serve as a premise from which I shall draw my conclusions."

"And your conclusions are ——?"

"That justice is an ironical goddess, whose eyes are never really bandaged."

"Your vein is too deep for me to-day. I wanted to tell you all my troubles, and you talk to me as though I were a professor."

"I didn't mean to be unkind," said I. "If you are really serious, I'm sorry."

"Sorry, why sorry?" he asked, quickly.

"It's such an old story. You fall in love with a girl's beautiful face—it's not the first time you've done it; you endow her with all sorts of qualities; you make her into an idol; and the whole thing only means that your æsthetic sense is gratified. That's a poor way of loving."

"It's a very real way," said Gerald, with some warmth. "I think you are horribly unsympathetic."

"I am in earnest," I answered. "A very short while ago you were quite taken up with Bella Sturgis; you don't care the least for her feelings; you simply follow your impulses, and desert her for a more attractive woman."

I do not know what made me espouse Bella's cause; perhaps I was hurt, more than I had time to realize, and seized on the first weapon to my hand.

"You don't spare *my* feelings," Gerald said, in a low voice. "All I can say is, that if Mary Hatherley won't have anything to do with me, I shall go away; I shall go and shoot big game—anything to get out of this horrible place. I *am* in earnest. I wasn't in earnest about Bella; I admired her very much, and all that, and mother is always urging me to marry; I should probably have drifted into marrying her ——," he broke off.

I felt an unreasoning anger against him.

"Poor Bella!" I cried. "You may drift into marrying her yet."

That finished our conversation. He went away without another word, leaving me alone with my anger and my heartache.

CHAPTER VII

I CONFESS that about this time I was led astray and over-mastered by conflicting emotions. My work, and my battles with Lady Harman's peculiarities, became unutterably irksome. I forgot how to efface myself; I spoke at the wrong moment, and on the wrong subject: I did not remember to be sympathetic, and I expected sympathy; in fact, I confused what was permitted to Mary Hatherley, with what was permitted to Mary Gower, with the result that I drank the cup of bitterness each day, the cup of triumph each night.

At this time I was much sought after; my devotion to art was supposed to denote genius, though it was hardly respectable, and wholly unnecessary; but people forgave me my persistent refusal to see anyone, or to go anywhere during the day, and asked me to their houses in the evening.

I was often chaperoned by Lady Harman, sometimes by Dr. Trefusis himself. I had many admirers, but I only remember them vaguely, like figures in a dream. The golden key that opened their hearts led me into strange places; some had never been tenanted, and were so cold and bare that I felt they could never be really warm or pleasant; others had been swept and garnished, and I was asked to believe that all traces of their former occupants were gone; others were full of rust and cobwebs, and old toys broken and thrust away; there was no room even for a new plaything. The key unlocked no sanctuary, with altar-lights and incense burning, waiting for the one divinity that was to fill its empty shrine. Those who loved me had loved before, and would love again.

Women, whose idol is success, worshipped me too, in their curious fashion; it became desirable in their eyes to be known as the friend of Mary Hatherley; a note of distinction was thus sounded: they were proud to demonstrate the fact that they were above jealousy, or fear of rivalry.

I liked many of them, with a liking tempered by amusement. I am glad to think now that I did not interfere wantonly with their lovers, their husbands, or their sons. I was discreet, to the verge of being disagreeable: indeed, had it not been for my face, I think they might almost have resented my indifference to their male belongings; and taken it as a personal affront.

I saw a great deal of Gerald, in the character of Mary Hatherley: the frost held, and he remained in London without a murmur; he was not much at home during the day; and Mary Gower had no speech with him alone.

"Something has happened to Gerald," Betty said one day. "I mean besides this business about Mary." They called her Mary by this time. "He wanders about picture galleries, I've found out; and some one saw him the other day in the British Museum. Isn't that somewhere in the city?"

"Not quite so bad," said I. The city had been Betty's terror, ever since she had been taken to the Tower as a child. "But isn't Mr. Harman merely improving his mind?"

"Yes, but why?" cried his sister. "He's done very well all these years without it. It isn't as though he were the sort of man who could do nothing else. He can ride and shoot better than any man I know. Why should he want to improve his mind?"

Her somewhat incoherent speech amused me; and it was true: a superficial culture would have sat oddly on Gerald Harman; whose charm lay in his simplicity, and a certain gallant bearing that might have fitted him to be the hero of a romance of the Elizabethan age; in which men were either knights or shepherds; full of a natural bravery, and keenly susceptible to the influence of women's beauty.

"Miss Hatherley is an artist," I suggested, in answer to Betty's remarks. She shrugged her shoulders.

"Mary Hatherley's just flirting with him," said she.

This was true: I had answered his letter; not in writing, nor indeed by any explicit word of mouth; but I had been kind, and had let him see that the letter had not displeased me; I had also led him to understand that the time was not yet come for any more open speech on his part. I was capricious: I used my power with but little mercy: these were days when I made him miserable; and days when I knew the world was re-created for him by my kindness.

Yet I was more wretched than I had ever been when I was only Mary Gower: I grew to hate the other Mary's beautiful face; her smile; the gracious turn of her head; her shapely hands: I grew to hate all this with a passionate intensity that frightened me. I seemed to have realized Mary Hatherley in a strange, objective way, as distinct from myself: she was the woman Gerald Harman loved; she was the woman I should have been, and was not; and then came a heart-stricken moment when I knew she was the woman who had done both Gerald and another a wrong that might never be undone.

It happened in this wise: I had gone down one day to the girls' sitting-room to fetch a book I had left there, when I met Gerald on the stairs. He

passed me by with the briefest possible word ; and with a look of annoyance on his face, that I was at a loss to account for, till I reached the sitting-room, and found Bella Sturgis there.

She was sitting with her face on her arms, by the writing-table, and I could see that she was crying. My instinct was to leave her ; but I was not quick enough to escape her notice, and she turned upon me with an angry movement.

" Why didn't you knock ? " said she.

In her confusion and distress she mistook me for a servant : I should have laughed, had I not been overcome by the conviction that Gerald had just left her ; and that something had passed between them, which was connected with Mary Hatherley.

" I am sorry if I disturbed you," said I. " I have come for a book I left here."

Then she saw her mistake, and flushed red.

" I beg your pardon ; I really didn't see—" she said ; and then, as though bowed down by the weight of her own distress, she dropped her head again on her hands.

I did not know what to do : it seemed an intrusion to remain ; and impossible to go.

" Forgive me," I said, at last. " You are in some trouble. I have intruded upon you unknowingly ; I can't go away without saying I wish I could do something for you."

She looked up at me, with manifest surprise ; tears shone still upon her face, and in her eyes : I wondered that Gerald had left her, even for Mary Hatherley.

" Why should you care ? " she asked.

" I'm always sorry for another woman," I said.

She looked at me again, with a miserable, uncertain air ; her haughty self-confidence had gone from her, and I felt emboldened to speak again.

" You may not know that I am Lady Harman's secretary. I have been in the house all day for a long while ; and I can't help seeing a great deal of what goes on in it. I know your trouble, Miss Sturgis."

She got up at that ; and looked for a moment as though she would have struck me ; then she suddenly lost her self-control, and burst into tears. Those tears were dreadful to me : I took her hand, and soothed her as though she had been a child ; and presently she sat down beside me.

" How do you know ? " she said. " You can't know."

"I've heard them talk of Mary Hatherley," said I.

"And I suppose they say I'm breaking my heart?" cried she, with a desperate attempt at scorn.

"They would not be far wrong," I answered.

She gave a long sigh.

"It hurts," she said, quite simply.

Shame and an aching remorse seized me. I had taken him from her; and had roused in him a love which must be always barren. I had surely put a knife into Bella's heart; and her simple words stabbed me back. Did I not know it hurt! I carried the self-same wound.

"Do you care for him so much?" I said.

At first she would not answer, and frowned, while the tears came into her eyes; then she said, brokenly.

"Yes—but we used to quarrel, and now it's all over."

"Do you think," I went on, "that if Mary Hatherley were to go away you could win him back?"

She pondered: I watched her beautiful face, and thought that I had hitherto misjudged her: her pride, the insolence of her beauty, her caprices, had been but the superficial manifestation of a passionate spirit; led astray by a world which cared only for the outer woman. Now that these things had been flung back in her face, her heart spoke: she lost the sense of her beauty, and its rights; and was more lovely than she had ever been, and did not know it.

"He used to love me, I'm sure," she said. "I believe he would again—I would not be so unkind—Oh, but what's the use of talking!"

I hardly heard the sound of my own voice as I answered her; there was a singing in my ears.

"I think he has been led away by a pretty face. I daresay he does not care for the real Mary Hatherley; he may return; be kind to him when he does."

"Oh, I will, I will," said she. "You have made me feel happier—I was so unhappy."

She bent forward impulsively, and kissed me. I kissed her back. "I am so glad," I said, and left the room hurriedly, to hide my emotion.

On my way home I went to see Dr. Trefusis. I found him alone, sitting over a pile of great folio volumes. His study, where I had so often found a refuge from the ills of life, looked warm and cheerful, with its shelves of books

from floor to ceiling, and great, open hearth. He appeared to rouse himself with some difficulty, and I noticed he looked older, and very wearied.

"I'm not come to disturb you," said I. "Let me sit by the fire whilst you read. I have something I want to think out."

"It will do me good to talk, child," he answered. "I've been poring over these books for too long. What is it you have to think over, Mary?"

"Only the old thing."

He looked at me with a quickened attention.

"I've been thinking over it too," he said.

Then he sat down on the other side of the fire-place; the room was aglow with the flames, and the bright light of two lamps; there seemed also to be a strange light on Dr. Trefusis' face.

"You know, Mary," he began solemnly, "that this case of yours has led me into strange studies, and strange speculations. They are all wicked; I am going to put away my books, for I begin to fear lest they should take me into places where madness lies, outside the phenomenal, where we were never meant to penetrate. You have shown me how human longing, if it be powerful enough, is nearly omnipotent, for evil as well as for good. Here, in these old books, in the *Magia Naturalis* of Johannes Faust, in this old Latin of Cornelius Agrippa, and many others, I learn how spirits 'can be dragged out of the air'; how alchemy can turn metal to gold: these things have a terrible fascination; but it is of the devil; I shall put them all away. Your longing turned Mary Gower, whom God made, into Mary Hatherley in whom He has no part."

He looked at me, with a shudder.

"The church put the alchemists to death for a less sin," he said. "This power you have brings you nothing but trouble: it may bring trouble to those you do not wish to injure. Mary, I implore you to stop, before it is too late."

All this in the mouth of Dr. Trefusis; the keen scientist, the ardent advocate of materialism; surprised me much. The gravity of his tone, so far removed from his ordinary carelessness, carried authority. All he said was my own inward, but unformulated conviction, put into words.

I asked him why he thought it might bring trouble to others.

"I have seen enough," he answered, "to understand your relations with the Harmans. It won't do, Mary. That young Harman ought not to be sacrificed to your love of experimentalizing."

At that I got up, and walked about the room.

"You do me injustice," said I. "I may have given way to a curiosity

which, taken alone, would not be legitimate, but my heart was concerned in this matter."

"Ah," said he. "I feared so."

I sat down on a stool at his feet, and gave him all my confidence. He did not interrupt me; and when I had finished, we were both silent for a long while.

"Do you not feel yourself, that such a state of things cannot go on?" he said, at last.

"I am determined to give it up," I answered. "To-morrow night shall be Mary Hatherley's last appearance."

"Why let her appear again at all?" he asked.

"Because I'm a woman: and I want to say good-bye to Gerald Harman."

The doctor laughed; I think to cover some emotion.

"Well, well, well," he said. "Have it so if you will. But be done with the thing: it's unholy: it's a work of the devil. There are more things in heaven and earth than ever I dreamt of in my philosophy; things I dare not tamper with. Now, Mary, will you climb to the top of the ladder, and put away Faustus, and Agrippa, and the rest? I've had enough of them."

We spent some time putting away the books: strange volumes; full of odd, symbolical drawings, and with wonderful titles, such as: "The Golden Tripod": "The Glory of the World, or the Gate of Paradise": "The All-Wise Doorkeeper."

The doctor crossed himself, as I put the last one in its place; and I laughed, in spite of my trouble.

"I've one thing more to say," he cried, turning suddenly on me. "I'm getting old, Mary, and I want a housekeeper, and a daughter. You refused me these once; you shall not refuse again. You and Miss Whateley must come and take charge of me. I promise you I'll age rapidly, and then you'll feel you are fulfilling a duty—a sensation dear to the soul of woman, I know."

We sat there over the fire for another hour. Before I left him, my promise had been given.

CHAPTER VIII

I woke the next morning with something of that indifference to life, which is the secret of so many peaceful deaths.

Mary Hatherley was condemned; she had but a brief hour left, and I knew not how she was to spend it: I only knew that she had to bid good-bye to Gerald Harman. The present hung before me like a veil; I could see the dim future moving behind it; a spectral army of figures all in gray; but they marched, this colourless procession of the years, with a monotony that grew into peace.

The thought of Mary Hatherley hardly troubled me; I did not care; I had passed through many deaths since that night when she had been born in all her beauty; for is not, "every step we take in life a death in the imagination"? I had held Beauty's sceptre, and had seen men slaves beneath it: I knew the isolation, the penalty of this greatness. Yet I owned that it was an empire for which it might well be worth paying: I held no theories based on mere sentiment; I owned that beauty might not possess all things; yet the woman who has not beauty neither has, nor pays. To this philosophy, or cynicism, I know not which to call it, had Mary Hatherley's experiences brought me.

I spent a strange day at Lady Harman's: the familiar place seemed unreal: in a week or two I should be gone, and all my days there would fade into the past; for I knew that I had no real hold on the lives of any of them; having come only as it were by accident into their midst; when they had treated me with as much kindness as was consistent with their education, their traditions, and the world in which they lived. Betty would marry one of her many lovers; and Clara some one who fed her intellectual vanity. And Gerald? I held my heart in check at the thought of Gerald.

I had met him first, as Mary Hatherley, in a crowd: it seemed like the logic of fate that I should take leave of him in a crowd; for our relations belonged to no world of peace and quietness, but to an order of life where Beauty, with her attendant pomp and circumstance, moved to the sound of music, and under the glare of a revealing light.

That evening we did not dance: there was singing, and stringed instruments; we moved about white stately rooms, where the music followed us like a memory. I spoke to many people, and knew nothing of what I said: at my

heart was torture, in my soul peace. The rest of the world was blotted out when I saw Gerald coming to me.

At first he spoke but little; he had the desperate air of a man who is determined to know his fate—and his silence was charged with suggestion. We stood for a long while near the musicians, and the aching sweetness of one of Schubert's melodies pierced me with the sword of pain and pleasure wherewith music wounds her lovers. The whole measure of my grief seemed contained in that searching, divine air; in the human, passionate note of the strings; in the purer, more radiant tone of the flutes and hautboys.

Then Gerald looked into my eyes, and said, "Let us come away"; and I went blindly with him through the rooms, till we reached a door that opened into a garden.

The night was hardly cold, and very still; only a faint throbbing from the far-away streets lay at the heart of the silence, and troubled it. I could see the outline of Gerald's face in the starlight; he said nothing, but took me suddenly in his arms and kissed me; and in that moment I tasted the essence of life. Then he let me go. "Now send me from you if you can—if you dare," said he.

"'Tis I who am going," I said.

"I am in earnest," answered he, "and I must have your answer."

"Oh, my answer," I cried, "is easily given. I do not love you. I can add something to that which you will not acknowledge. You have never loved me; you loved my face, but of my heart and soul you have known nothing."

I had not meant to say such words to him; I had meant to let him go with something like a benediction; but my bitterness rose up and made me speak.

"It is true I love your face," he said, quite gently. "But more than that. Why are you so unkind to me?"

Then there came a wild moment in which I was near telling him all; and asking him if he could not love the soul of me, and take no thought for my body: but I paused, and remembered I had resolved never to let him know.

"I am not as unkind as I seem," I said. "It is kinder to tell you the truth. I am not made for love, or to be happy, and have children. I must live apart: do not ask me why; I cannot tell you. I shall not forget you; I hope you will forget me—at least, think of me without pain. And now, good-bye." I moved away.

"Is this your last word? Are you going to leave me so?" he cried out.

I stopped then, and looked back at him: the notes of a violin came through the silence like a shaft, and struck at my heart; they mingled with a woman's voice, in a love-song. I went to his side.

"I have one last word to leave you," I said to him. "You will forget me. When I am only a memory, go back to Bella; for you loved her."

He said nothing, and I was glad of the darkness, which covered my face. I turned back into the house, leaving him standing there; and went away, bidding no farewells.

I sat through that long night, and waited for the dawn; and when the dawn came, I kissed the wonderful reflected face of Mary Hatherley, and wished her a long good-bye.

"O face of my dreams," I said, "it is well that you should go back into nothingness; your hour is over; each moment held a possible joy; a surer pain: a brief triumph; a long regret. Let me decline into the lesser ways of life, where Beauty's flying feet have never passed; but where Peace may be seen stealing, a shadowy figure, with eyes looking towards the sun."

O. SHAKESPEAR.

FROM THE FRENCH OF JEAN MORÉAS

" O petites fées :"

TINY fays with the long gold hair,
You sang, as I slept, with a tender grace ;
O tiny fays with the long gold hair,
In a spell-bound forest, a charmèd place.

In a forest enchanted with spells untold
Compassionate gnomes as I slept the while
Offer'd me gently a sceptre of gold,
A sceptre of gold as I slept the while.

I know they are dreams and deceits of sleep
The sceptres of gold and the forest songs ;
Yet still like a credulous child I weep,
And my heart for the rest of the woodland longs :
And I care not now tho' I know the songs
Are only the dreams and deceits of sleep.

GABRIEL GILLETT.

WILLIAM BLAKE AND HIS ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE DIVINE COMEDY

III. THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF DANTE

THE late Mr. John Addington Symonds wrote; in a preface to certain Dante illustrations by Stradanus, a sixteenth century artist of no great excellence, published in phototype by Mr. Unwin in 1892; that the illustrations of Gustave Doré, "in spite of glaring artistic defects, must, I think, be reckoned first among numerous attempts to translate Dante's conceptions into terms of plastic art." One can only account for this praise of a noisy and demagogic art, an art heavy as with the rank breath of the mob, by supposing that a temperament, strong enough to explore with unfailing alertness the countless schools and influences of the Renaissance in Italy is of necessity a little lacking in delicacy of judgment and in the finer substances of emotion. It is more difficult to account for so admirable a scholar not only preferring these illustrations to the work of what he called "the graceful and affected Botticelli" although "Doré was fitted for his task, not by dramatic vigour, by feeling for pure beauty, or by anything sternly in sympathy with the supreme poet's soul, but by a very effective sense of luminosity and gloom," but preferring them because "he created a fanciful world, which makes the movement of Dante's *dramatis personæ* conceivable, introducing the ordinary intelligence into those vast regions thronged with destinies of souls and creeds and empires." When the ordinary student finds this ordinary intelligence in an illustrator, he thinks, because it is his own intelligence, that it is an accurate interpretation of the text, while the work of extraordinary intelligences is merely an expression of their own ideas and feelings. Doré and Stradanus, he will tell you, have given us something of the world of Dante, but Blake and Botticelli have builded worlds of their own and called them Dante's: as if Dante's world were more than a mass of symbols of colour and form and sound which put on humanity, when they arouse some mind to an intense and romantic life that is not

theirs ; as if it was not one's own sorrows and angers and regrets and terrors and hopes that awaken to condemnation or repentance while Dante treads his eternal pilgrimage ; as if any poet or painter or musician could be other than an enchanter calling with a persuasive or compelling ritual, creatures, noble or ignoble, divine or dæmonic, covered with scales or in shining raiment, that he never imagined, out of the bottomless deeps of imaginations he never foresaw ; as if the noblest achievement of art was not when the artist enfolds himself in darkness, while he casts over his readers a light as of a wild and terrible dawn.

Let us therefore put away the designs to " The Divine Comedy," in which there is " an ordinary intelligence," and consider only the designs in which the magical ritual has called up extraordinary shapes, the magical light glimmered upon a world, different from the Dantesque world of our own intelligence in its ordinary and daily moods, upon a difficult and distinguished world. Most of the series of designs to Dante, and there are a good number, need not busy anyone for a moment. Genelli has done a copious series, which is very able in the " formal " " generalized " way which Blake hated, and which is spiritually ridiculous. Penelli has transformed the Inferno into a vulgar Walpurgis night, and a certain Schuler, whom I do not find in the biographical dictionaries, but who was apparently a German, has prefaced certain flaccid designs with some excellent charts ; while Stradanus has made a series for " The Inferno " which has so many of the more material and unessential powers of art, and is so extremely undistinguished in conception, that one supposes him to have touched in the sixteenth century the same public Doré has touched in the nineteenth.

Though with many doubts, I am tempted to value Flaxman's designs to the " Inferno," the " Purgatorio," and the " Paradiso," only a little above the best of these ; because he does not seem to have ever been really moved by Dante, and so to have sunk into a formal manner, which is a reflection of the vital manner of his Homer and Hesiod. His designs to "The Divine Comedy" will be laid, one imagines, with some ceremony in that immortal waste paper basket in which Time carries with many sighs the failures of great men. I am perhaps wrong, however, because Flaxman even at his best has not yet touched me very deeply, and I hardly ever hope to escape this limitation of my ruling stars. That Signorelli does not seem greatly more interesting, except here and there, as in the drawing of the Angel, full of innocence and energy, coming from the boat which has carried so many souls to the foot of the mountain of purgation, can only be because one knows him through poor reproductions from frescoes half mouldered away with damp. A little known series, drawn by Adolph

Stürler, an artist of German extraction, who was settled in Florence in the first half of this century, are very poor in drawing, very pathetic and powerful in invention, and full of most interesting pre-Raphaelitic detail. Certain groups of figures, who, having set love above reason, listen in the last abandonment of despair to the judgment of Minos, or walk with a poignant melancholy to the foot of his throne through a land where owls and strange beasts move hither and thither with the sterile content of the evil that neither loves nor hates; and a Cerberus full of patient cruelty; are admirable and moving in the extreme. All Stürler's designs have, however, the languor of a mind that does its work by a succession of delicate critical perceptions rather than the decision and energy of true creation, and are more a curious contribution to artistic methods than an imaginative force.

The only series that compete with Blake's are those of Botticelli and Giulio Clovio, and these contrast rather than compete; for Blake did not live to carry his "Paradiso" beyond the first faint pencillings, the first thin washes of colour, while Botticelli only, as I think, became supremely imaginative in his "Paradiso," and Clovio never attempted the "Inferno" and "Purgatorio" at all. The imaginations of Botticelli and Clovio were overshadowed by the cloister, and it was only when they passed beyond the world or into some noble peace which is not the world's peace, that they won a perfect freedom. Blake had not such mastery over figure and drapery as had Botticelli; but he could sympathize with the persons, and delight in the scenery of "The Inferno" and "The Purgatorio" as Botticelli could not, and could fill them with a mysterious and spiritual significance born perhaps of a mystical pantheism. The flames of Botticelli give one no emotion, and his car of Beatrice is no symbolic chariot of the church led by the gryphon, half eagle, half lion, of Christ's dual nature, but is a fragment of some mediæval pageant pictured with a merely technical inspiration. Clovio, working in the manner of the illuminators of missals, has created a marvellous vision, a paradise of serene air reflected in a little mirror, a heaven of sociability and humility and prettiness, the heaven of children and of monks; but one cannot imagine him deeply moved, as the modern world is moved, by the symbolism of bird and beast, of tree and mountain, of flame and darkness. It was a profound understanding of all creatures and things; a profound sympathy with passionate and lost souls; made possible in their extreme intensity by his revolt against corporeal law, and corporeal reason; which made Blake the one perfectly fit illustrator for the Inferno and the Purgatorio: in the serene and rapturous emptiness of Dante's Paradise he would find no symbols but a few abstract emblems; and he had no love for the abstract;

and with the drapery and the gestures of Beatrice and Virgil, he would have prospered less than did Clovio and Botticelli.

The drawing of the car of Beatrice, following the seven candlesticks in slow procession along the borders of Lethe, is from a tracing made many years ago by the late John Linnell and his son, John Linnell also, from a drawing which is too faint for reproduction. The Botticelli is reproduced with the permission of Messrs. Lawrence and Bullen from their admirable edition of his designs to "The Divine Comedy."

W. B. YEATS.

A SONG

ALL that a man may pray,
Have I not prayed to thee?
What were praise left to say,
Has not been said by me,
O *ma mie?*

Yet thine eyes and thine heart,
Always were dumb to me:
Only to be my part,
Sorrow has come from thee,
O *ma mie!*

Where shall I seek and hide
My grief away with me?
Lest my bitter tears should chide,
Bring brief dismay to thee,
O *ma mie!*

More than a man may pray
Have I not prayed to thee?
What were praise left to say,
Has not been said by me,
O *ma mie?*

ERNEST DOWSON.

MUTABILITY

I

THE strong sweet south-wester, fresh and vigorous as a god, after its journey across the Channel which flashed blue and white to the horizon and broke in chalky waves at the foot of the down, flung the girl's hair, loose and wet from the sea, across her chin and throat, fluttering its straggling gold into her eyes. The man who lay at her feet watched her with admiration and desire as she stood sideways to the wind that threatened to blow the sailor-cap on her head, a hundred yards down the grassy slope into the discoloured breakers. They had been together a good deal since the day when Algernon Deepdale—a young man well known to exist only on his expectations and an aunt—came to the hotel at which the Grays had been staying, and had recognized her as the partner of a dance some weeks back. Her friendship had made the time go rapidly, and he had thrown up an invitation in order to stay longer in the seaside town which her presence alone made endurable. Hers was an exceptional beauty, but it was not her only charm. She was possessed of an intelligence not very common among women, nor was ever at a loss for ideas or words. She talked with her eyes and hands as well as her lips, as if the momentary thought that she expressed moved her body to the cadence of her words, her gestures giving strength to the phrase. She was a living being, thought Deepdale, contrasting her mentally with the lack of animation and ideas which is the portion of the majority. Moreover, she was fond of being well dressed, as even the French muslin blouse tied at throat and waist with an unobtainable vieux-rose-colour ribbon attested. His eyes followed her every movement, and a little tempest of desire went through him, as his gaze at last unconsciously attracted her and she turned with a smile.

"The wind is too strong," she said, as she sat down, throwing her hair from her face and pulling her skirts over her ankles.

"Helen, will you marry me?" he said, taking his cigarette out of his mouth, and looking up into her eyes.

"*Apropos* of what? How dreadfully abrupt you are!" she replied.

"*Apropos* of my thoughts and in logical sequence. May I have an answer?"

"Why do you ask me that?" she answered, somewhat awkwardly.

"For several reasons," he replied. "First, because I am going away this afternoon: then because I should like you to be my wife; and the third reason I think you have known for some time."

"I am so sorry," she said, gently. "It is quite impossible."

"I don't see why," he answered.

"It is quite impossible," she continued. "My people would be dead against it, and I am much too extravagant for you. Besides, I don't want to marry anyone."

"Do you not care for me at all, Helen?" he asked.

"I like you very well," she replied, "but how long have I known you? Three months? In another three you will have forgotten me."

"You mean you don't like me enough to marry me? Is that it?"

She was silent. Then suddenly she said:

"Why cannot you be patient? You have only known me for this little time and yet you want everything or nothing, at once."

"Oh no, not at once. I would wait for you, if there was any chance. Is there, Helen?"

She shook her head.

"How can I tell? There is none now," she said.

"But if there was?" he persisted.

"I can't say. Forget me. It will be much better. There can be no use in looking forward for a year."

"I think there would be—for me," he answered.

She laughed lightly.

"How long have you thought of me like this?" she asked.

"Since the first time I saw you," he said, "that afternoon, when it was so dark I could barely make out your face, but I fell in love with your mouth, the loveliest mouth in the world."

A smile came back to her face. The flag on the coastguard's cottage flapped in the wind, and, far below, the blue waves curled silently into innumerable points of foam. A steamer, infinitesimal though it seemed, left a track of pale smoke behind it, and the sun shone joyously over all.

"How sweet it is," he said, yielding himself up to the sensuous delight of summer centering in the beauty of the girl at his side. "Let me look at it all once more, since I must leave it all to-day. How you are to be envied, you

who remain. And I have to go back to that intolerable, dusty, sultry, horrible town!"

He turned to look at the downs behind, and turned back again.

"No, there is nothing like the sea," he continued. "Oh, Helen, if I could take back some hope of you!"

"You are so impatient!" she said. "You must wait and see if there is a chance. I don't suppose there will be. You had better forget me altogether. You can easily."

"Will you decide which I shall do?" he asked.

"No, it is for you to decide."

"I shall wait then," he answered. "You will not promise, Helen?"

"No," she said, shaking her head. "We must go back,'" she added, abruptly. "Are you ready?"

"Yes," he said, springing up and stretching his hands to her. She took them and rose.

"We are good friends," he asked, still holding her hands. She smiled in his eyes with a "Yes."

"You are not angry?" she asked. "You won't be bitter against me, will you? I should be so sorry."

"Bitter?" he repeated. "No, certainly not. How could I be?"

"Don't be bitter about it," she continued, "I should hate to think that you could be angry with me."

"I can well promise you that," he said, bending his face towards hers. How beautiful she was, with her little round face, her exquisite mouth and her eyes! "And I shall not forget you. I shall wait."

She smiled, and then added more seriously:

"Don't wait for me. It would be foolish of you to give up anything for my sake. I can promise you nothing."

"You cannot prevent my hoping, can you?" he asked.

"I suppose not," she answered, as they turned down the hillside and rejoined their party without more delay.

II

The chalky downs faded behind the train, and Deepdale found himself back again in the town which he imagined that he hated so much. In fact, it was desolate—with that lamentably seedy desolation which London wears for three months out of the twelve. Piccadilly without a well-dressed man or woman is

not a pleasant sight, and Deepdale reached his rooms near that thoroughfare in an exceedingly bad temper. His letters—including several bills and a note from Mrs. Westham to warn him that she was coming to see him immediately on his arrival—also displeased him.

Mrs. Westham was the only woman out of the innumerable women with whom he had had relations of some kind who was utterly devoted to him, and who therefore bored him beyond all others. Though their relationship was of long standing he hesitated to break it off, partly from the vanity of being so able to dominate her, and partly from the desire of causing her as little pain as possible. So long as he could keep her at a distance he was content, but when a meeting became inevitable it was for him an unpleasant experience. Fortunately she had her house to attend to, and he managed to arrange that his spare hours as a rule should not coincide with hers. Her husband was abroad for six months out of the year or her movements would have been even more restrained. But at last he found himself at the end of his patience. Let come what would, with the receipt of her note he determined to break off the affair altogether.

With his return to the everyday world of London, on the other hand, his attraction towards Helen Gray had speedily faded. He had almost forgotten the incident of the morning. At the bottom, he had been insincere in professing love for her. She was certainly beautiful, she would in all probability, as an only child, be fairly rich, and she was a woman he would be proud to have for his wife, for purposes of display at Ascot or the opera. Moreover, the gracious beauty of her form and face were a promise of deeper happiness to the man whom she could love. But he was not very deeply hurt, he thought, by her refusal, which, after all, was extremely sensible. His income of nine hundred a year would be mere poverty in marriage, and it was doubtful if he would have more for several years.

His man announcing Mrs. Westham disturbed his thoughts.

She came in hesitatingly. When the door had closed he kissed her, and drew a chair to the window. She turned up her veil.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, "how ill you look! What is the matter?"

Her face, which once had had a certain charm for him, was drawn and yellow. He would hardly have recognized her.

"I am ill," she said, "but never mind that now. Are you glad to see me?" she asked, kissing his hands.

"Of course I am," he answered.

"How changed you are, Algy," she answered. "But you can't help not

being as fond of me now as you were a year ago! I wonder why you have changed?"

It was the same scene he had been through before, over and over again. She always asked the same questions and he always made the same replies. She had very little tact, he thought! He was prepared for another unpleasant quarter of an hour, but he hoped that it would result in his being able to prevent its recurrence in the future.

"Who were the people you saw so much of while you were away?" she asked. "You never told me their names."

"The Grays," he answered, briefly.

"Oh!" she said. "It was that Gray girl who was talked about in connection with you. To think that I didn't know. I suppose you are engaged to her now?"

"I am not," he replied, coldly.

"Did you propose to her?"

"No."

"I don't believe you," she said. "Well, I am going, you don't want me. I will not bore you again." She choked a little. "You are not worth my love. I wonder if you will ever find a woman to love you as I have done. But I won't bore you again."

"Don't be a fool, Milly," he said. "Sit down."

"I told you that I would give you up when you found another woman," she continued, standing. "When I heard you talked about with that Gray girl I did not even feel jealous. I was so sure of you. But you are quite changed. Oh, God help me! Algy, how can I live without you?" she cried, as she sank back into the chair.

He leaned forward and stroked her hand.

"You don't even kiss me now!" she exclaimed, passionately, throwing back his caress. "And I had so much to tell you! Are you tired of me? Is that the truth?"

"No," he said, indifferently.

"It is," she retorted. "Yet even now I cannot see it. I love you too much to believe it. Tell me and let me know. Are you tired of me?"

At all events, it was his duty to hurt her as little as possible. "Of course, I am not," he answered. Then a thought struck him which made him look curiously at her. The same thought at that moment came uppermost in her mind, crushing out her misery for the time. She lay back in the chair and half closed her eyelids.

"There is one thing I wanted to tell you," she said, "I have a child!"

The announcement was not unforeseen, but it was a shock. To conceal the fact he flicked the end of his cigarette carefully into the grate before answering. Then he said:

"Are you quite sure now?"

She nodded. Her heart was beating a tattoo and she could barely speak.

"What an infernal complication!" he exclaimed, frowning, although a vague feeling of pride which appeared to him to be wholly stupid, but which he could not check, rose in him. "What are you going to do?"

"I shall have to kill myself," she replied. Why did he not throw himself at her feet, she thought, beseeching her not to do such a thing? He did not answer, but stared hard at the end of the cigarette, still frowning.

"I believe you would be glad if I did!" she exclaimed. Then as her excitement grew, she continued, "Algy, you are not so brutal as to wish that, are you?"

"Don't be absurd. I was thinking what on earth is to be done. When is he coming back?"

"Not for three months."

Abruptly and without tangible cause, the whole story of their relationship unfolded itself before him, bare of the imagined beauty with which his thought had once bedecked it, in its plain and squalid ugliness. He was filled in spite of himself with horror of the woman before him. It seemed—in this crisis of his nerves—as if he could not tolerate her presence for a moment longer. Though his face did not show his feeling, she seemed to grasp his thought. She felt that there was no mercy to be expected from him, no hope for her to cling to. She rose bravely.

"Good-bye, Algy," she said. "We shall not meet again. Don't speak to me. Let me go. Good-bye."

He took her hand for a moment and then opened the door. As she went out he called his servant to open the street door for her and returned to his room.

"Thank God that is finished," he muttered, as he moved about, nervously touching things on the tables or the mantelpiece. Then, after a time, he went out. At his club he found the only man he looked on as a friend, Lord Reggie Cork, a philosophical young man whose eternal tranquillity of temper was extremely pleasing to the nervous temperament of Deepdale.

"Hullo, Deepdale," he said, "come and dine with me. What are you doing in town at this time? Do you feel inclined to go to Norway?"

"Norway? Are you going?"

"To-morrow, ten-thirty. Come with me, there's a good chap!"

Deepdale thought for a moment. Then he answered:

"Right! I will come with you. I shall not come back here till next year. I am sick of town and of England too. I have been getting into trouble."

Deepdale proceeded to expound matters to his friend and to ask his advice.

Whatever Lord Reggie's opinion may have been, the two men left England on the morrow, Deepdale having arranged to let his chambers during his absence.

III

He kept his word and did not return till the following year. When he did the season was well under weigh. It was an exceptionally beautiful spring, and London was—in Deepdale's eyes at least—its central and most perfect flower. To one who had been away from it so long, the city seemed to give a promise of new life, and, as his cab flashed down Piccadilly, the sight of the crush of carriages, the crowd at Hyde Park Corner, lifted his heart like a draught of wine. Lady Audley, on whom he called, was delighted to see him. She reproached him for his long disappearance and his tardy return.

"You haven't seen the new beauty," she said, laughing. In answer to his inquiry, she continued—

"She's an old friend of yours, I hear. In society? No; she used not to be, but Lady Rivers, people say, met her somewhere or other in the winter, and was so fascinated that she has had her under her wing for the last three weeks. We are all raving about her."

"You say I know her?" he asked.

"If that isn't like you men!" she laughed. "You have met this girl, fallen in love with her, I believe, and have forgotten all about it. Well, you will fall in love with her again. That is my prophecy."

"When am I likely to see her?" he asked.

"If you like to bore yourself by coming here to-night you are sure to see her. Come any time after eleven."

"Won't you tell me who she is?" he said.

"No. She will surprise you; and you will have to be grateful to me for giving you an emotion."

He took his leave presently, and made his way into the Park. The subject slipped out of his mind, and he did not mention it to any of the numberless acquaintances he met. Most of them seemed glad to see him, but a few appeared to his sensitive egoism to be somewhat strange in manner. He was wondering at this, a little annoyed, when he ran up against Lord Reggie, whom he had not seen for several months.

"Hullo, Deepdale!" he exclaimed. "Just back? I say, you've come at a bad time."

"How's that?" asked Deepdale.

"Haven't you heard, or are you trying to play deep?" he answered.

"I have heard nothing," was the answer.

"Good Lord! I'll have to tell you then. Come and sit down."

Deepdale obeyed.

"It's pretty serious, old chap," Cork continued. "It's all over the place, or it wouldn't matter so much. You remember a woman I saw at your place once or twice—Mrs. Westham—the woman you told me about?"

Deepdale nodded.

"Well, she poisoned herself a month ago," said the other, lowering his voice. "But that isn't all. These women are so confoundedly theatrical. She couldn't make her exit from this world without letting people know why. I dare say she didn't mean to harm you, but it looks as if she wanted a little revenge at the last moment. She wrote a letter to you and left it on her table before drinking the stuff. It came out at the inquest; I've a paper at my rooms, but I daresay you can guess what it was."

Deepdale, with his head bent, was gazing at the point of his stick in the gravel.

"Damn her," he said, in a low voice, choking with anger, yet stunned with the shock. He had nearly forgotten her, but the news of her death was like a violent blow. "How far has it gone?"

"Everywhere, naturally. You can't prevent people reading newspapers."

"I saw Lady Audley just now," he muttered. "She said nothing."

"Very likely she hadn't heard. But she won't be nice when she does."

"Let us go to your rooms," he said, standing up a little shakily. It cost him an effort not to break down altogether. His knees seemed to have lost all sensation: he could hardly steady himself, his hands shook, and his face had gone suddenly white.

Lord Reggie drew his arm through his own.

"Steady, old man," said he, as they crossed the Row. "It's no good showing 'em how you've been hit. Get into this cab," he added as they emerged from the archway.

"No, we'll walk!" exclaimed Deepdale, with an oath. "Damn the woman! I thought I was going to have a good time of it this season. You know my aunt is dead? No? she died a week ago and left me nearly everything. I've been scraping along all this time on a few beggarly hundreds a year, and now that it's thousands, this infernal woman steps in and spoils all my hand! Damn her!"

"You needn't swear," said Cork. "You were pretty well gone on her once, weren't you?"

Deepdale made no answer as his thoughts went back into the past. He walked with his head bent down. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"My God, what a thing to happen to a man!"

His first feeling of anger had passed. He was overwhelmed now with remorse. Why had he not stayed and helped her? He forgot how weary of her presence he had been, and reproached himself only for his leaving her to her trouble. What misery she must have endured! What a beast he was! Would he have to go through life with the consciousness of having committed the most callous of murders, of having caused the death of the one woman who had really loved him, wearisome though she was!

"What am I to do, Reggie?" he asked, to break the silence.

"Wait and see what happens," replied Cork philosophically. He was a believer in Fate.

"What an infernal scandal it will be," Deepdale murmured under his breath. He was too fond of society to be as unconventional as he wished, and he by no means wished to give up his season.

When they reached Lord Reggie's chambers, he sank into a chair.

"Give me the paper and get me a drink—brandy and soda," he said.

The lines were a misty blur, and he could not read at first. After a time some of the sentences became legible. He was reading her letter; the letter that was meant only for him, and yet was printed for everyone's eyes; trying to skip the details of her death, though they forced themselves under his notice and burnt themselves on his mind. It was a much saner and less effusive letter than he expected, and was both dignified and pathetic.

Lord Reggie sat opposite his friend, dreading an outburst of frantic grief. He was relieved when Deepdale lifted his head and merely remarked,

"I don't believe the thing has gone or will go as far as you try to make out. Haven't you exaggerated?"

A sudden revulsion of feeling had come upon him. The sober sentences had calmed him, and he had recovered his nerve. After all, what did it matter? He was not responsible for her death. He had tired of her and left her. That was nothing unusual. Her foolishness was no fault of his. So far he satisfied himself: and as to the scandal, he would have to live it down or go away if it became necessary.

Deepdale's temperament was one that is not rare. He could take things easily or badly, almost as he chose. Though the catastrophe might, if he had allowed it to do so, have broken him down, yet by an effort of will he managed to throw it on one side. The shock remained, like a wound that annoys when the first pain has gone by, but he had determined to let it gain no ascendancy over him. He was able to forget very easily, and he relied on this ability to preserve him from any future outbreaks of conscience.

Instead of answering, Lord Reggie, relieved to find that there was to be no scene, proceeded to discourse with some warmth to his friend on his callousness and brutality. Deepdale listened meekly, and when Lord Reggie had come to the end of his disquisition, they arranged to dine and pass the evening together. It was not far from midnight when they appeared at Lady Audley's party. Deepdale was relieved to find that there was no change towards him in any of the people to whom he spoke. A weight seemed lifted from his heart.

"Where is your new beauty?" he asked his hostess, when there was a momentary cessation of arrivals.

"She's here. That is all I know," she answered, glancing with pretended dismay into the hopelessly crowded room. "Oh, there she is," she exclaimed, as some movement opened a momentary space in the crush. His eyes followed the direction of hers, and lighted on a tall fair girl with blonde hair and enormous pale yellow sleeves.

"What? Miss Gray?" he asked.

"Go and talk to her," she replied. "I am a confirmed match-maker, you know," she added, good humouredly, as she turned to smile on some new guests.

Deepdale edged his way towards his old acquaintance. He made slow progress, but at last he succeeded in reaching her. Her welcome was more cordial than he could have hoped, and the man to whom she had been speaking moved away unwillingly.

"Where have you been all this time?" she said. "You ought to be punished. You look ever so much older, and you don't look well."

"No," he answered, "I'm rather seedy. But you are more beautiful than ever," he added, lowering his voice.

She laughed. "You have not forgotten your old sin of paying untrue compliments!"

"Untrue?" he replied. "Will you never believe me? Can't we get out of this crowd? Shall we go on the balcony?"

The balcony was large, and by good luck they found two chairs.

"Tell me all about yourself," she said as she sat down. He obeyed as far as he could, and did not omit to mention the death of his aunt and his consequent increase of fortune.

"How delightful for you," she said. "And now you are perfectly happy, I suppose."

"Do you think I am so inconstant?" he asked. "Or have you forgotten the downs?"

"No, I don't forget. It is you who forget, and go away for three-quarters of a year without a word."

"It was an unpardonable sin," he replied; "but will you forgive me? It was really very necessary, and perhaps, perhaps you remember why it was of no use for me to come back sooner?"

"I forgive you," she said softly.

"Are you any happier now that you have achieved success?" he asked. "You used to long for success."

"No, I think not," she answered. "It seems only natural. And then everything appears just as stupid as before. There is always something wanting to my life. I don't know what."

"It is the same with me," he said, "with a difference. I know what I want."

"I should have thought you had everything you wanted," she answered.

"No, there is always one thing," he said, touching her hand. She withdrew it gently, and stood up.

"Let us go in," she said; "I am cooler now, and I am afraid of catching cold."

"When may I come and see you?" he asked, as he rose.

She thought for a moment.

"On Friday," she answered.

"And to-day is Monday!" he exclaimed.

"Friday is the only possible day this week. I am staying with Lady Rivers, you know, and I have to go out with her. But I can be in on Friday, about four, if you like."

"On Friday, then," he answered. "I want to ask you a question I asked you once before," he added, as they re-entered the room, and further talk became impossible.

She turned away with a smile.

"Who was that you were on the balcony with?" asked Lady Rivers an hour later, as they were driving home.

"A Mr. Deepdale," Helen answered, "an old friend. I have asked him to come on Friday to tea."

"My dear Helen!" exclaimed Lady Rivers, "he is quite impossible. You ought not to know such a man."

"Why not?" she queried.

"Haven't you heard about his wickedness? It is really too dreadful."

"No, I have heard nothing against him," she answered frigidly, while some strange fear made her tremble. "I believe he is going to ask me to marry him."

"Helen! You must not think of it," said Lady Rivers in an agonizing tone. "It would be very wrong of you. I don't know the whole tale, but my husband told me a good deal of it."

"I wish to hear nothing," she replied, coldly.

"Oh, yes, you must, and I shall tell you."

IV

The three following days were like nightmares to Helen. She had listened to the story without the least change of expression, but in her own room she had broken into a passion of tears. Until that moment she had scarcely realized that she loved the man at all. She knew it at last, conquered by jealousy of the woman he had killed. To her own despair, she was not overwhelmed with horror for his crime. It did not seem unnatural. She only hated the woman who had come between them. But her own state of mind seemed like dishonour, and she suffered all the tortures of remorse for what she could not help.

Before Friday, however, she had regained some tranquillity. She would refuse, if he proposed to her, and would forget him. When Deepdale called, she therefore welcomed him very frigidly. But she was alone, and he had determined not to let the opportunity slip.

"Why are you so changed, so cold?" he asked, after a time. The truth suddenly flashed upon him, and he swiftly decided on his course of action. "Have people been telling you tales about me?" he added.

"Tales that are true, I am afraid," she answered.

"I would have told you myself," he said, gently. "It is too dreadful for words, isn't it? You should pity me, rather than blame me; my life is quite ruined. I have nothing left me now on earth."

"Don't say that," she murmured. "You will forget, and so will others. But it is very sad."

"It is much more; it is my ruin. But you, at least, may pity me. My life is hard enough to bear, without losing you even as a friend—for you were my friend once, were you not?"

She did not answer, but her lips moved inaudibly.

"You know now why I went away. Can you not guess what I suffered all the time, knowing that I had lost you, you who were ever like a star in my dark heaven? Think now what my life will be, without the one hope that filled me for so long, the one thing that made me live. I have lost that—and I have lost everything. It is my own fault—and yet not so much my fault as perhaps you think. It was my sin, and I must pay for it. In these days there is no Elizabeth to forgive Tannhauser."

She listened immovably, but her eyes were moist, and her lips parted, as she breathed rapidly.

"I will go," he said, rising. "Shall I ever see you again, I wonder? Oh, Helen," he cried, taking her hands as she stood before him, "I could have loved you so well!"

She did not move away, and he bent his head to cover her hands with kisses.

"Helen," he said, looking into her eyes, "is it all over? Will not your forgiveness cover even me? Cannot the past be the past? I am broken-hearted for my crime. You and you only can give me new life. Will you forgive me? Will you not love me as I love you?"

He placed his arm round her neck, tentatively. She did not resist, and as he drew nearer, her head sank on his shoulder, and she uttered a little sigh of content.

He smiled to himself in triumph; then he bent his head and kissed her on the mouth.

THEODORE WRATISLAW.

O'SULLIVAN RUA TO THE SECRET ROSE

FAR off, most secret, and inviolate Rose,
Enfold me in my hour of hours ; where those
Who sought thee at the Holy Sepulchre,
Or in the wine vat, dwell beyond the stir
And tumult of defeated dreams ; and deep
Among pale eyelids, heavy with the sleep
Men have named beauty. Your heavy leaves enfold
The ancient beards, the helms of ruby and gold
Of the crowned Magi ; and the Hound of Cu
Who met Fand walking among flaming dew,
And lost the world and Emer for a kiss ;
And him who drove the gods out of their liss,
And till a hundred morns had flowered red
Feasted and wept the barrows of his dead ;
And the proud dreaming king who flung the crown
And sorrow away, and calling bard and clown
Dwelt among wine-stained wanderers in deep woods ;
And him who sold tillage, and house, and goods,
And sought through lands and islands numberless years,
Until he found, with laughter and with tears,
A woman, of so shining loveliness,
That men threshed corn at midnight by a tress,
A little stolen tress.
I, too, await
The hour of thy great wind of love and hate.
When shall the stars be blown about the sky,
Like the sparks blown out of a smithy, and die ?
Surely thine hour has come, thy great wind blows,
Far off, most secret, and inviolate Rose ?

W. B. YEATS.

THE OLD WOMEN

THEY pass upon their old, tremulous feet,
Creeping with little satchels down the street,
And they remember, many years ago,
Passing that way in silks. They wander, slow
And solitary, through the city ways,
And they alone remember those old days
Men have forgotten. In their shaking heads
A dancer of old carnivals yet treads
The measure of past waltzes, and they see
The candles lit again, the patchouli
Sweeten the air, and the warm cloud of musk
Enchant the passing of the passionate dusk.
Then you will see a light begin to creep
Under the earthen eyelids, dimmed with sleep,
And a new tremor, happy and uncouth,
Jerking about the corners of the mouth.
Then the old head drops down again, and shakes,
Muttering.
Sometimes, when the swift gaslight wakes
The dreams and fever of the sleepless town,
A shaking huddled thing in a black gown
Will steal at midnight, carrying with her
Violet little bags of lavender,
Into the tap-room full of noisy light;
Or, at the crowded earlier hour of night,
Sidle, with matches, up to some who stand
About a stage-door, and, with furtive hand,
Appealing: "I too was a dancer, when
Your fathers would have been young gentlemen!"
And sometimes, out of some lean ancient throat,
A broken voice, with here and there a note

Of unspoilt crystal, suddenly will arise
Into the night, while a cracked fiddle cries
Pantingly after; and you know she sings
The passing of light, famous, passing things.
And sometimes, in the hours past midnight, reels
Out of an alley upon staggering heels,
Or into the dark keeping of the stones
About a doorway, a vague thing of bones
And draggled hair.
And all these have been loved,
And not one ruinous body has not moved
The heart of man's desire, nor has not seemed
Immortal in the eyes of one who dreamed
The dream that men call love. This is the end
Of much fair flesh; it is for this you tend
Your delicate bodies many careful years,
To be this thing of laughter and of tears,
To be this living judgment of the dead,
An old grey woman with a shaking head.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

A ROMANCE OF THREE FOOLS

IT was the year when Marie Barrone sang for a season at the "Folly," never to be forgotten by those who heard her; when London, or the idler part of it, was very much in love with her, and her spirit of waywardness and all mischief. It was a year of romances; and of them all, that in which Marie played the part of amused heroine and our famous three were the heroes, was quite the most entertaining.

At this time, the leader of the three, Jack Barry, or as most of us knew him, "Jack Momus," that being the name under which he wrote the little comedies and lyrical burlesques chiefly associated with him,—was at the height of his singular career. The success of his latest work, "Sweet Cinderella," at the "Folly," thanks to Marie's delightful singing and dancing, had for once filled his pockets to overflowing; and it must be said they overflowed excessively. He was reckless in his extravagance of good-luck now, as he had been reckless before from ill-luck; and he showed his quality in nothing more than in the choice of his two companions, who did not tend, on the whole, to restrain him.

Young Pavier—the Hon. Tom Pavier—was certainly not the kind of young man to be an economical factor in anybody's equation. A thrice mortgaged peer's third son, who has been disowned by his noble father, who has compromised more than his purse because of his infatuation for the turf, and who has taken, half out of bravado, to driving a hansom for a living before he is thirty, is not likely to be over much in love with respectability, and the social virtues, for their own sake. His name, in truth, was by this become something of a byword with the latest incarnation of Mrs. Grundy—Lady Kyo: "Like young Pavier!" she would say, and close her eyes. As for the third of the three, "Sinister" Smith,—him we know better now as John Smith, R.A.; but at this time he chiefly drew comic pictures for that short-lived paper, the "Babbler," besides occasionally painting extraordinary portraits of modern people in a mediæval manner.

A more excellent trio for the amusement of a spirited heroine could not

well be imagined. All three were of accord in their devotion to Miss Marie. Almost every other night, for Jack Momus, to call him so, was never tired of hearing his jokes in their histrionic setting, they arrived, sooner or later, at the theatre. They usually came in the hansom which Momus had purchased in the exuberance of his pockets, and had leased to Tom Pavier on very unbusiness-like terms. This remarkable vehicle was suggested by that which appeared nightly on the stage in "Sweet Cinderella," and like that, was always at Marie's service; she greatly appreciated it, and often drove home in it to her lodgings in Westminster, after theatre. It was not, indeed, until she had twice running experienced the sensation of a street collision, under Tom Pavier's reckless driving, that she showed any hesitation about it. Thereafter, one night, when Tom drove Barry to the stage-door to meet her, they found a suspicious private brougham waiting there. When Miss Marie at length tripped out, she gave an odd little glance at the two vehicles, and at Barry bowing at her elbow; and then turning towards the brougham, she stammered out a naïve explanation that she felt it was not at all right, "you know, to be always taking your hansom; though, to be sure, a hansom was better fun than anything!"

This was the beginning of disaster. She had always been rather mysterious in her comings and goings; but after this she became more and more elusive, while the attentions of other admirers were nightly more obvious. The brougham itself did not long remain a mystery: it was only one of many attentions from the same admirer, Lord Merthen; while the bouquets of Captain Jolywell made it like a *pot-pourri* on wheels. So time went, and the pleasant early summer began to lose its greenness in London, while Marie Barrone still drew tears by her song of the country flowers which, in a state of nature, her audience might have cared for much less. One evening, late in June, Momus, who grew more dejected as Marie grew more elusive, made a desperate effort to get her to come to a little supper at Fantochetti's. But no! not even that; though as she said "No!" her voice had the sympathetic thrill which was so effective in "Sweet Cinderella," and her eyes looked sorrowfully at him where he stood, hat off, his cherubic visage absurdly wrinkled in his wistful anxiety. However, on the following Saturday, after performance, when Sinister was present, she seemed to relent. Momus and Sinister had been driven up by Tom, and stood at the brougham step a moment, while Tom looked on from his driver's perch, a few yards off.

"I'm going to have two days' holiday," said Marie. "I'm rather tired; my voice was like a crow's to-night. Didn't you notice in my

primrose song? My doctor says I may have to give up singing, if I don't take care!"

"You never sang better, I swear!" responded Momus, and Sinister corroborated with his lips. But she went on gaily:

"I'm so sorry I can't come to Fantochetti's! Ah, you've been so kind, all of you,"—here her voice had that little quiver again. "Well, I suppose Thomas,—my Thomas I mean, not yours," she explained, with a mischievous smile at Tom Pavier,—"is impatient, and wants to be off. You know, I never like to say good-bye, even only for a day or two. *Au revoir* is better!"

"*À Demain* is better still," ingeniously interposed Momus. She shook her pretty head.

"No, I'm afraid it will have to be good-bye London to-morrow, for a while at least."

"And Olva's fête?" asked Momus. The fête was a fancy dress ball, at Count Olva's, which among certain less particular sections of frivolous society was to be a great event in its way.

"Ah, Olva's fête," said Marie, adjusting her flowers, "I had forgotten: it will be fun to meet there. But in case ——;" she hesitated, putting the flowers to her face, as it might be to hide a furtive smile, "in case my voice is still hoarse?"

"No, no," interposed Momus, "you must come! So *au revoir!*"

"*Au revoir!*" she echoed. And the brougham drove off.

Some days later Momus heard from Mrs. Harriet at the Folly—Mrs. Harriet being Miss Marie's tire-woman—that Marie was likely to resume her part on the very evening of the fête, and was having a new frock, very pretty and fantastic, in white and blue and gold, no doubt for the Olva occasion. At this, he decided to give her a bouquet, simple and costly; which he ordered forthwith at Centifiori's. His plans were, to see the last act of "Cinderella" that evening, present Marie with the bouquet as she left the theatre, humbly begging her to bear it to Count Olva's; then don his own fancy-dress—a clown's motley, very carefully copied from an old Italian print—and so meet Marie at the fête at midnight. The chief lion of the occasion, it should be explained, was an African one,—the black Prince of Xula. It struck him as an ingenious idea, which Marie would appreciate, that they should make the Prince himself the point of assignation in the crowd at Olva's.

"The Prince at midnight!" He was so pleased with the idea, that he kept repeating the words to himself in his excitement.

Finding on reflection that he would barely have time to prepare for the fête after theatre, he decided, when the evening in question came, to attire himself in advance, hide his Italian motley under his great-coat, hear a little of Marie's singing from the back of the first circle, and then go round and intercept her with his bouquet. At a little after ten-thirty, Tom Pavier drove him to the "Folly"—a box containing the precious bouquet by his side—through a slow downpour of rain. The hansom drew up at the main entrance with a characteristic dash, just as Sinister was alighting from another cab. It was the hour of Marie's best song, and Momus, in his haste and excitement, after briefly exchanging a friendly word with Sinister, ran upstairs eagerly. From within, the familiar noise of the violins and oboe, playing the opening strains of Marie's song, reached his ears seductively. Another second, and to this boyish access of expectancy there ensued a cold thrill of dismay. On the corridor wall, a square placard, red-lettered, was fastened, which ran thus :

"*In consequence of continued indisposition, Miss Marie Barrone is again unable to appear this evening. Miss Nelly Cavotte has consented to take the part of Cinderella in her unavoidable absence.*"

He did not wait to see more, not having the heart to look at the stage itself, where Marie's pretty figure and bright eyes usually faced him. He pointed out the placard to Sinister (who had followed), with a grotesque grimace and an indescribable air of disappointment.

"I wish I may die!" he began, with an hysterical little laugh. But Sinister, whose emotions never showed on his colourless, expressionless face, interposed gently :

"If I were you, I'd go behind and see Mrs. Harriet, my boy! It's only a cold she has got. You will hear her sing on many a night to come!" Sinister further consoled him by seizing his arm and conducting him round the house until they found Mrs. Harriet, who was hastily putting on a black bonnet over her black curls with the aid of a cracked looking-glass, as she stood at the door of Miss Barrone's dressing room. She told them that Marie had arrived at the theatre half an hour before performance, and had had an interview with the stage-manager, who had been in a rage ever since.

"Too bad to sing; not too bad to dance at that what-d'ye-call it to-night, I know!" said Mrs. Harriet, shaking her curls. "I daresay she has a cold; but cold or not, she cares for nobody—not she, when she takes it into her head!" This was all Mrs. Harriet had to say.

They did not wait to see the angry manager, or inquire further. Momus

took the wild resolution of driving off straightway to her rooms, to make sure of her. So he resumed the hansom, parting with Sinister, who did not like these undignified flights. By this time there were other reasons for haste than the fact of their being late. A heavy rain began to come down with great determination. They careered through Palace Yard in a perfect deluge, and Tom turned into the narrow street where Marie lived, half-blinded by the storm. But here his sense of vision might well be quickened. Under the rainy gas-light, one thing he saw clearly: Marie's familiar brougham! which was being driven rapidly out of the turning at the other end of the street, an ominous brace of trunks on top. He drew up, and cried through the slit to Momus:

"There she goes—her blessed brougham's just turned the corner."

"Nonsense, man!" screamed Momus. "It's not—it can't be! Drive on to the door!"

Tom drove on, and stopped at Marie's door. Momus leapt out, and knocked furiously. After a delay, that seemed hours, a grimy little house-maid opened the door.

"Miss Barrone?" he cried.

The maid blinked her eyes at him, and drew back: "She've gone aw'y, sir!"

Momus could have wept. "Why, she said she would be in;—has she just gone?" He fumbled out half-a-crown.

The child, who knew him of old, smiled sagaciously. She probably thought him an actor from the "Folly." "Miss Berewn didn't be at the theeayter to-night——" she was beginning to explain.

"The devil!" ejaculated he, "I know that,—but see;" he put the coin in her dirty little hand: "Was —that—her—carriage?"

She nodded reluctantly, and Momus turned and leapt back into the hansom. "You're right—'twas the brougham," he cried to Tom. "After it, man! Go it, Peg!"

The hansom whirled off furiously in the direction of Whitehall, causing consternation there in the stream of buses and cabs. At the top of Whitehall Tom thought he caught a glimpse at last of the vanished brougham, and whipped up Peg to a still hotter pace. So following along Pall Mall, at the foot of the Haymarket he made it out distinctly, half way up that thoroughfare At Piccadilly Circus he was almost within hail, and Momus was chuckling as he saw; when, lo! another hansom, crossing at right angles, was surprised by Tom's wild and irresponsible irruption, so that the two vehicles cannoned

with astonishing effect. Peg went down as if she was shot, while the other horse pawed the footboard for a moment in front of Momus, and then, recoiling, went down in turn. Momus, for his part leapt out, slipped, pitched headlong; while his hat flew one way, the precious box with the flowers another, where it was hurled under Peg's lively heels, as she lay a-kicking, and there speedily yielded up its little golden orchids and other rare blossoms to a muddy doom. It was a cruel stroke, which might have upset the quest of a less devoted, or a less mercurial, knight errant. But not so Momus. He still, in all this wreck, had his eye on the brougham, now rapidly disappearing down Piccadilly, all unconscious of the confusions it had wrought behind it. Mopping hastily the mud off his coat and doublet, picking up his volatile crush-hat, he hailed another hansom, and retook the pursuit, leaving Tom to his fate. As he was now whirled along Piccadilly, to add to his misfortunes, a drop that fell from somewhere on his nose, suddenly connected itself with a peculiar sensation in his head and hair, which, he remembered, he had first noticed after his fall. Putting his hand up, he found his well-arranged locks disturbed by a very pretty stream of crimson, which had been all this while slowly trickling through them, and was now combining with the mud to add a new and original adornment to his piebald doublet. But little he cared in his mad pre-occupation, so long as he did not lose Marie too. Once, at the foot of Bond Street, a block of carriages cost him a profane expense of breath, but he had again come within hailing distance of the fugitives by the time they had reached the top and emerged in Oxford Street. So the pursuit was maintained along Oxford Street, and up Edgware Road, until the brougham turned towards Paddington Station. Here another small delay, caused by two passing omnibuses, allowed the gap between the two to widen again. However, in the end, Momus dashed up, just as Marie, having dismounted, was seen disappearing through the portico of the station, a dark blue travelling dress and a veil proving a very transparent disguise. Momus hurled himself, in his mud and motley, a startling figure enough, out of his hansom, and was rushing through after her, intent only on overtaking her, when a strong hand caught his arm, and stopped him violently. He wriggled and turned as if on a pivot, and as he did so, in turning, saw the impassive good-natured face of a Herculean railway policeman.

"Pardon, sir!" said this amiable, irresistible giant. "Afraid you are hurt, sir! Not so fast!"

"Now, by all that's wicked," screamed his captive, "let me go! See—wait—wait! That lady, see! O Lord!"

With this, Momus fainted.

Next day, about noon, Sinister was roused from a profound sleep, proper to a man who had been up till four that morning, by a loud knocking at his door. This door, it should be said, gave entrance to two small rooms and a large studio at the top of a house in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The knocking proved to be from the vigorous fist of Tom Pavier, who explained last night's pursuit, the upset, and the disappearance of our hero-in-chief after it. Finally, as Tom discovered at Paddington, poor Momus had been conveyed from the station in a state of collapse to a hospital near by. There, suffering from the effects of his accident in Piccadilly Circus, and the excitement of Miss Marie's disappearance under his very eyes, he had spent the night in a fine fever. Sinister lost no time now in getting into his clothes, and making his way there.

He found his friend sitting up in bed in an accident ward, between two much more seriously damaged fellow-patients. When Momus saw him, he held out his hand with a deprecatory gesture.

"We lost her after all, old chap!" he cried, with a half-sob, "A damned railway bobby collared me in the station. I must have been a pretty sight. I don't know how I came here!"

After a little comforting philosophy from Sinister, he grew calmer; and that evening they were allowed to take him home, with one arm in bandages, and some sticking-plaster on his head. Indeed, his condition was not serious, his excitement growing less feverish. Half that night, however, Sinister sat by his bedside, and humoured him when he talked, still half-deliriously, of following Marie—to the world's end if need be.

This idea was still dominant when Momus had recovered sufficiently to resume his usual ways. The very first thing he did was to set out in quest of Miss Marie's address, which at last he was lucky enough to procure from her landlady in Westminster, in consideration of a certain bribe. The address ran:

"Aberduly Arms,
Aberduly,
North Wales."

Procuring next a guide to North Wales, he discovered that Aberduly was a rising seaside place. He discovered, moreover, what he thought significant, that Marie's friend, Lord Merthen, had a seat in the same county. Revolving these things in his inventive mind, he presently evolved a delightful scheme;

nothing more nor less than a driving tour across country, and in the hansom itself, into Wales (*à la* Jack Mytton, who was one of Momus's favourite heroes), ending with a descent upon Aberduly and Miss Marie.

It was in pursuance of this scheme, that three days later, at the impossible hour of seven in the morning, the early milkmen in Chelsea were startled by an unusual spectacle. This was the arrival at Mr. Barry's door of the hansom, resplendent in black and yellow, drawn tandem by Tom Pavier's mare "Peg," and a well-matched bay horse, while Tom himself, in an amazing suit of light check, a red rose in his button-hole, handled the reins to masterly effect. All this Momus, already up and in the act of shaving his pink cheeks, saw from his window; and he found the sight inspiring. Meanwhile Tom might have been observed dismounting, when, having found two delighted loafers to hold his horses, he made his way into the house, humming the familiar hunting ditty from "Jack Straw":

"I hear the horn a blowin',
And off they'll soon be throwin',
But first of all I'm goin'
To taste the hunting cup:
A cup 'tis, well compounded,
As I have always found it,
That many a care have drownded—
But Yoicks! the hunt is up!"

On arriving upstairs, he found a breakfast table laid for three in Barry's room, but as that hero did not at once appear, he threw up the window, and lighting a pipe, sat himself down on the window-sill. From this point of vantage he regarded with great satisfaction the inspiring sight below, where Peg and her leader stood pawing and fretting to be off, their bright harness and bay coats agleam in the early sun. He was still absorbed in this satisfying contemplation, when Momus, descending, found him there; whereupon, as Sinister delayed to appear, they proceeded to breakfast. Ere they finished, another hansom rattled up, and their party was complete; and as the clock struck eight, they started on their journey, the hansom and its team deploying gracefully on the embankment, ere it went off at a smart pace westward. How their journey thereafter startled Oxford one day, Leamington another, and Shrewsbury on a third, may be better imagined than described. On the fourth day, however, when they had crossed the Welsh border, there befell a climacteric adventure which is essential to their history.

On that afternoon, it was a Saturday, the last in July, Tom was whipping up his dusty horses with every intention of reaching the village of Croeslwyd

in time for dinner. There had been a great fair in the village on the day before, and various waggons of roundabouts, and other such rural amusements, met our adventurers from time to time. They had successfully passed several of these vehicles—a matter of some difficulty in a narrow country by-road—when, turning a corner, Tom found before him a steep descent of a quarter of a mile or less, ending at a narrow bridge over a small stream in the hollow. Down this Tom drove, with an insufficient brake, at a somewhat exciting pace, and about half-way down the hill, he and his two companions were startled by a rattle of wheels on the opposite bank, where the road turned sharply and disappeared amid some trees in the middle distance. At this turn now suddenly appeared a descending vehicle, which in colour far outshone the hansom, and in reckless speed quite equalled it. An ungainly chariot, with tarnished gold and green and red decorations, and of fantastic shape—evidently some part of a travelling show! Drawn by a wildly galloping white horse, of a gaunt appearance, it was driven by a little rubicund man, in a grey overcoat, with another smaller man, in the grotesque attire and white paint of a circus clown, and an immense negro, clad in irreproachable black, at his side. Thus accoutred, the chariot-in-advance of Mr. Hopkins' "Combination Zoological Circus and Panopticon," dawned on our three heroes in its ungainly descent as a very doubtful apparition indeed. For, obviously, something had gone wrong. The clown was distorting his white paint by his cries, while the grey man tugged desperately at the reins as the caravan charged the bridge. Tom Pavier, for his part, as the hansom, too, neared the bottom of the hill, and the bridge grew imminent, waved them aside with wild gestures. All in vain. He might as well have waved the wayside trees out of the way.

In another second, as the two vehicles made desperate assay together of the narrow bridge, there was a frightful crash, and circus-chariot and hansom, men and horses, were chaos under a cloud of dust. At the collision, Tom's leader had swerved, broken the traces, and leapt into the stream below. Peg had gone down heavily, and the hansom, after a wild twirl, had fallen over on its side against the parapet. As for the chariot, it fell into a grotesque rattling ruin of plank and pasteboard, wheel and shaft, amid which the grey, white, and black figures of the unfortunate Mr. Hopkins, the clown, and the gentleman of colour, sprawled disastrously. It was not a dignified catastrophe; as Sinister felt when, rescuing himself, and feeling his left arm ruefully, he looked round. Except the clown, however, everybody was good-humoured; he alone fell to a furious vituperation of Tom Pavier, who took no notice as he first liberated

his hapless mare from the ruins, and got her on to her feet, and then ran to his other horse, which lay half in the stream below with a broken leg.

"What's to be done?" he cried out to the party above.

Whereupon the gentleman of colour, who had been bandaging a damaged knee with a great unconcern, limped down from the bridge, and drew a Colt's revolver from his breast-pocket. This he discharged, on a nod from Tom, into the poor beast's brain. In other ways, and in spite of his bandaged and seriously damaged leg, he proved the most capable man of the six. He directed the operation of drawing the cracked shell of the hansom, which was an irretrievable ruin, off the bridge, and then set to, to throw the ruins of the circus chariot over the parapet on to the grass below. He, too, it was who intervened when the dispute over the rights and wrongs of the catastrophe had made Momus all but hysterical, and the little grey man irreligious; and arranged a small transaction by which Momus paid out five yellow coins to the credit of the "Combination Zoological Circus and Panopticon." When, within an hour, Momus and Sinister were setting off as a relief party for Croeslwyd, to further arrange for the disposition of the wreckage, he presented a card to Momus with some ceremony. This card Momus carefully treasured up for possible future use, in case he might come to require such a functionary some day in some spectacular way. It was inscribed:

PROFESSOR CHARLIE JONSON,

LION-KING.

[*Hopkins' Circus.*]

Momus and Sinister made a sorry-looking couple enough as they limped up painfully at last to the Castle Inn. When they had repaired their costumes and their nerves a little under its hospitable roof, they must needs, with returning energy, fall to quarrelling over their predicament. Sinister, long-suffering as he was, felt mortified for once. Like other humorists, used to serving up other people in a comic dish, he disliked extremely to be made comic himself. A hundred times he confounded himself for having given the fates that make for ridicule such an absurd opportunity. As it was, his precious top-hat, smashed out of all dignity, that had barely served to cover his head on the way from the scene of accident, might well serve as a symbol of his state of mind

Momus was unfeeling enough to chuckle over it as he played a dusty tattoo with his fingers on its indented crown. This was the finishing stroke. When now Momus went on to carol forth, with provoking light-heartedness, a favourite stave from "Cinderella":

"The world is full of girls, I know,
But only one's the perfect girl,
To set the sorry world aglow
With a laughing eye and a golden curl—
Ah, Cinderella!"

Sinister lost patience altogether.

"Damn Cinderella!" he exclaimed, and announced with some spleen that he did not mean to go on any further with the adventure; in fact, he proposed to go back to town forthwith. Momus scorned the idea. The late catastrophe had only served to excite him, and his blood was up.

"Do as you like!" he said, with a certain impudence of tone, and a characteristic grimace and roll of the head, "I'm going on!" And he sang again, turning Sinister's unfortunate hat over contemptuously on the table:

"With a laughing eye and a golden curl—
Ah, Cinderella!"

When Tom arrived at the Castle Inn, a couple of hours later, conveyed thither, together with sundry relics of the hansom, in an old chaise which had been sent after him, behind which the hapless Peg painfully limped, it was to find Sinister alone. Momus had disappeared, incontinently gone on to Aberduly, without a doubt. Sinister was still sulky; for the idea of a Sunday alone with Tom in this uninspiring inn did not tend to restore his equanimity. As for the rest of the actors lately figuring on the highway—the circus proprietor and his two collaborateurs—they had gone off in an opposite direction, to appear no more in these pages.

Sunday broke dull and wet, to add to Sinister's disgust and ennui, and his bruised shoulder had grown painful. But there was no possible escape, and his only solace lay in an old punch-bowl, which Tom had discovered and filled. But even this proved unsatisfying, and both were in the depths of a profound boredom, listening to the melancholy drip of the rain, when as the clock struck ten, the sound of a horse's hoofs without announced a late arrival.

A few seconds more, and in walked Momus, streaming from the rain. His usual jaunty step was stiff, and his face, beneath its round comic lines, had an expression of utter weariness.

"You'd be tired if you were me!" he said, as they exclaimed at his plight. "I've ridden fifty miles in the rain, on a beast bewitched, since breakfast!"

Since his knowledge of the horse as a beast of burden had been confined hitherto to that gained inside a London hansom, this ride of Momus might, in fact, be considered a remarkable performance.

"Oh, poor Momus! Give him some punch!" cried Sinister.

Tom administered a rousing tumbler, and they set the exhausted hero to steam by the fire.

The ride was, in truth, only one of many singular incidents through which fate had been educating him since he left this room and Sinister yesterday. While he sat there, with the consciousness that his two companions were waiting to hear his story, these incidents revived themselves, and formed a fantastic jumble in his head. As he had gone out singing, with "Ah Cinderella!" for refrain, unabashed by accident, still following fast on the heels of romance; so he had kept his way to the end, though the fates declared against him at every turn. He had taken train, the train was blocked for an hour. That delay over, he had hired a pony for the next stage of his journey, although he did not know how to ride. The pony, in turn, proved an incorrigible malingerer, and deceived its perplexed rider by pretending to go dead lame. Then, hating walking, Momus had walked ten miles, along mountain roads and through mountain solitudes, which, sublime as they really were, seemed to him only dreary. Thus that fate which, he had been used to say, had learnt something of humour at last from observing his antics, had played pranks with him all the way, without breaking for a moment his romantic spirit of adventure. He went through with his romance, it must be owned, in a more than comic heroism. It came to an end at last, however, when he reached on the previous evening the "Aberduly Arms," a huge and preposterous modern erection on the seashore at Aberduly, once one of the shyest watering-places on the Welsh coast. At the "Aberduly Arms," you may find, if you will, the famous, the lyrical and loquacious, Mr. John Jones, proprietor of the establishment, formerly, as everyone knows, the leading tenor in the "Imperial English Comic Opera Company," in which, as Momus could not fail to remember, Miss Marie Barrone had made her *début* in the provinces some years before the time of our story.

The first thing that caught Momus's eye, in fact, in the entrance-hall of the hotel, was a great red-and-blue placard, announcing "A Grand Concert," in the Aberduly Assembly Rooms, on the following evening. On this poster, the name of the distinguished Mr. John Jones figured conspicuously in large

red capitals. In still larger blue letters, betokening an even greater musical fame, was blazoned forth a name that gave Momus a thrill,—the name of MISS MARIE BARRONE: *The Celebrated London Soprano, from the Folly Theatre!!*

* * * * * * *

It was a copy of this poster which Momus, recollecting himself as he sipped his punch, while Sinister and Tom Pavier looked on inquiringly, drew from his pocket. As he unfolded it, he smiled ruefully.

"I've got a little tale to tell you!" he said; "but first of all I want you to drink the health of ——"

"Mrs. Momus!" promptly interrupted Tom Pavier, rising and preparing to drink the toast with unselfish fervour.

But Momus shook his head, and smiled a significant smile.

"Lady Merthen!" said Sinister, then, in his turn, with an accent of inevitable conviction, as he caught up his glass.

"No!" said Momus with a grimace, "Mrs. John Jones!"

ERNEST RHYS.

IN SCITUATE

UNDER a hill in Scituate,
Where sleep four hundred men of Kent,
My friend one bobolincolned June
Set up his rooftree of content.

Content for not too long, of course;
Since painter's eye makes rover's heart,
And the next turning of the road
May cheapen the last touch of art.

Yet also, since the world is wide,
And noon's face never twice the same,
Why not sit down and let the sun,
That artist careless of his fame,

Exhibit to our eyes, offhand,
As mood may dictate and time serve,
His precious perishable scraps
Of fleeting colour, melting curve?

And while he shifts them all too soon,
Make vivid note of this and that,
Careful of nothing but to keep
The beauties we most marvel at.

Selective merely, bent to save
The sheer delirium of the eye,
Which best may solace or rejoice
Some fellow-rover by and by;

That stumbling on it, he exclaim,
"What mounting sea-smoke! What a blue!"
And at the glory we beheld,
His smouldering joy may kindle too.

Merely selective? Bring me back,
Verbatim from the lecture hall,
Your notes of So-and-so's discourse;
The gist and substance are not all.

The unconscious hand betrays to me
What listener it was took heed,
Eager or slovenly or prim;
A written character indeed!

Much more in painting; every stroke
That weaves the very sunset's ply,
Luminous, palpitant, reveals
How throbbed the heart behind the eye;

How hand was but the cunning dwarf
Of spirit, his triumphant lord
Marching in Nature's pageantry,
Elated in the vast accord.

Art is a rubric for the soul,
Man's comment on the book of earth,
The little human summary
Which gives that common volume worth.

And coming on some painter's work,—
His marginal remarks, as 'twere,—
You cry not only, "What a blue!"
But, "What a human heart beat here!"

Here is the little sloping field,
Where billow upon billow rolls
The sea of daisies in the sun,
When June brings back the orioles.

All summer here the crooning winds
Are cradled in the rocking dunes,
Till they, full height and burly grown,
Go seaward and forget their croons.

And out of the Canadian north
Comes winter like a huge gray gnome,
To blanket the red dunes with snow
And muffle the green sea with foam.

I could sit here all day and watch
The seas at battle smoke and wade,
And in the cold night wake to hear
The booming of their cannonade.

Then smiling turn to sleep and say,
" In vain dark's banners are unfurled ;
That ceaseless roll is God's tattoo
Upon the round drum of the world."

And waking find without surprise
The first sun in a week of storm.
The southward eaves begin to drip,
And the faint Marshfield hills look warm ;

The brushwood all a purple mist ;
The blue sea creaming on the shore ;
As if the year in his last days
Had not a sorrow to deplore.

Then evening by the fire of logs,
With some old song or some new book ;
Our Lady Nicotine to share
Our single bliss ; while seaward, look,—

Orion mounting peaceful guard
Over our brother's new-made tent,
Beside a hill in Scituate
Where sleep so sound those men of Kent.

BLISS CARMAN.

MD
95.

AT THE ALHAMBRA

IMPRESSIONS AND SENSATIONS

I

AT the Alhambra I can never sit anywhere but in the front row of the stalls. As a point of view, the point of view considered in the abstract, I admit that the position has its disadvantages. Certainly, the most magical glimpse I ever caught of an Alhambra ballet was from the road in front, from the other side of the road, one night when two doors were suddenly flung open just as I was passing. In the moment's interval before the doors closed again, I saw, in that odd, unexpected way, over the heads of the audience, far off in a sort of blue mist, the whole stage, its brilliant crowd drawn up in the last pose, just as the curtain was beginning to descend. It stamped itself in my brain, an impression caught just at the perfect moment, by some rare felicity of chance. But that is not an impression that can be repeated. In the general way I prefer to see my illusions very clearly, recognizing them as illusions, and yet, to my own perverse and decadent way of thinking, losing none of their charm. I have been reproved, before now, for singing "the charm of rouge on fragile cheeks," but it is a charm that I fully appreciate. Maquillage, to be attractive, must of course be unnecessary. As a disguise for age or misfortune, it has no interest for me. But, of all places, on the stage, and of all people, on the cheeks of young people: there, it seems to me that make-up is intensely fascinating, and its recognition is of the essence of my delight in a stage performance. I do not for a moment want really to believe in what I see before me; to believe that those wigs are hair, that grease-paint a blush; any more than I want really to believe that the actor whom I have just been shaking hands with has turned into a real live emperor since I left him. I know that a delightful imposition is being practised upon me; that I am to see fairyland for a while; and to me all that glitters shall be gold. But I would have no pretence of reality: I do not, for my part, find that the discovery of a stage-trick lessens my

appreciation of what that trick effects. There is this charming person, for instance, at the Alhambra: in the street she is handsome rather than pretty; on the stage she is pretty rather than handsome. I know exactly how she will look in her different wigs, exactly what her make-up will bring out in her and conceal; I can allow, when I see her on the stage, for every hair's-breadth of change: yet does my knowledge of all this interfere with my sensation of pleasure as I see her dancing on the other side of the footlights? Quite the contrary; and I will go further, and admit that there is a special charm to me in a yet nearer view of these beautiful illusions. That is why I like to alternate the point of view of the front row of the stalls with the point of view of behind the scenes.

There, one sees one's illusions in the making; but how exquisite in their frank artificiality, are these painted faces, all these tawdry ornaments, decorations, which are as yet only "properties"! I have never been disappointed, as so many are disappointed, by what there is to be seen in that debatable land "behind the scenes." For one thing, I never expected to find an Arabian Nights' Entertainment of delightful splendour and delightful wickedness, and so I was never chagrined at not finding it. The *coulisses* of the Alhambra are, in themselves, quite prosaic. They form, of course, the three sides of a square, the outer rim; the fourth side being the footlights. On the prompt side is the stage-manager's chair, the row of brass handles which regulate the lights and ring down the curtain, and the little mirror, with a ledge running along below it, which (with the addition of a movable screen) constitute the dressing-room accommodation of the "turns" who have to make a change of costume. Layer after layer of scenery is piled up against the wall at the side, and nearly the whole time there is a bustling of scene-shifters shoving along some great tottering framework, of which one sees only the canvas back and the narrow rim of wood. Turn to the right, pass under that archway, and the stone staircase going down leads to the canteen; that going up leads to the dressing-rooms of the *corps de ballet*. Another staircase on the other side of the stage leads to the dressing-rooms of the principals, the extra ladies, and the children. Downstairs are some more dressing-rooms for the supers and the male "turns." The back of the stage is merely a passage: it is occasionally a refuge from the stampede of scenery in a quick change.

It is ten minutes before the ballet is to commence. Some clowning comic people are doing their show in front of a drop-scene; behind, on the vacant space in the middle of the stage, the ladies of the ballet are beginning to assemble. They come down in twos and threes, tying a few final bows,

buttoning a few overlooked buttons, drawing on their gloves, adjusting one another's coats and wigs. As I shake hands with one after another, my hands get quite white and rough with the chalk-powder they have been rubbing over their skin. Is not even this a charming sensation, a sensation in which one seems actually to partake of the beautiful artificiality of the place? All around me are the young faces that I know so well, both as they are and as the footlights show them. Now I see them in all the undisguise of make-up: the exact line of red paint along the lips, every shading of black under the eyes, the pink of the ears and cheeks, and just where it ends under the chin and along the rim of throat. In a plain girl make-up only seems to intensify her plainness; for make-up does but give colour and piquancy to what is already in a face, it adds nothing new. But in a pretty girl how exquisitely becoming all this is, what a new kind of exciting savour it gives to her real charm! It has, to the remnant of Puritan conscience or consciousness that is the heritage of us all, a certain sense of dangerous wickedness, the delight of forbidden fruit. The very phrase, painted women, has come to have an association of sin; and to have put paint on her cheeks, though for the innocent necessities of her profession, gives to a woman a sort of symbolic corruption. At once she seems to typify the sorceries and entanglements of what is most deliberately enticing in her sex—

"Femina dulce malum, pariter favus atque venenum"—

with all that is most subtle, and least like nature, in her power to charm. Then there is the indiscretion of the costumes, meant to appeal to the senses, and now thronging one with the unconcern of long use; these girls travestied as boys, so boyish sometimes, in their slim youth; the feminine contours now escaping, now accentuated. All are jumbled together, in a brilliant confusion; the hot faces, the shirt-sleeves of scene-shifters, striking rapidly through a group of princes, peasants, and fairies. In a corner some of the children are doing a dance; now and again an older girl, in a sudden access of gaiety, will try a few whimsical steps; there is a chatter of conversation, a coming and going; some one is hunting everywhere for a missing "property"; some one else has lost a shoe, or a glove, or is calling for a pin to repair the loss of a button. And now three girls, from opposite directions, will make a simultaneous rush at the stage-manager. "Mr. Forde, I can't get on my wig!" "Please, Mr. Forde, may I have a sheet of notepaper?" "Oh, Mr. Forde, may Miss —— stay off? she has such a bad headache she can hardly stand." Meanwhile, the overture has commenced; and now a warning clap is heard,

and all but those who appear in the first scene retreat hurriedly to the wings. The curtain is about to rise on the ballet.

To watch a ballet from the wings is to lose all sense of proportion, all knowledge of the piece as a whole; but, in return, it is fruitful in happy accidents, in momentary points of view, in chance felicities of light and shade and movement. It is almost to be in the performance oneself, and yet passive, a spectator, with the leisure to look about one. You see the reverse of the picture: the girls at the back lounging against the set scenes, turning to talk with someone at the side; you see how lazily the lazy girls are moving, and how mechanical and irregular are the motions that flow into rhythm when seen from the front. Now one is in the centre of a jostling crowd, hurrying past one on to the stage; now the same crowd returns, charging at full speed between the scenery, everyone trying to reach the dressing-room stairs first. And there is the constant shifting of scenery, from which one has a series of escapes, as it bears down unexpectedly, in some new direction. The ballet, half seen in the centre of the stage, seen in sections, has, in the glimpses that can be caught of it, a contradictory appearance of mere nature and of absolute unreality. And beyond the footlights, on the other side of the orchestra, one can see the boxes near the stalls, the men standing by the bar, an angle cut sharply off from the stalls, with the light full on the faces, the intent eyes, the gray smoke curling up from the cigarettes. It is all a bewilderment; but to me, certainly, a bewilderment that is always delightful.

II

To the amateur of what is more artificial in the art of illusion, there is nothing so interesting as a stage rehearsal, and there is no stage rehearsal so interesting as the rehearsal of a ballet. Coming suddenly out of the clear cold of a winter morning into the comparative warmth of the dimly-lighted Alhambra (it must have been three years ago, now, I think), I found that one of the rehearsals of a ballet named after "Aladdin" was about to begin; and, standing at the far end of the hall, I saw the stage gradually filling with half-dressed figures, a few men in overcoats moving rapidly to and fro in their midst. Lit only by a T-light, these odd, disconcerting figures strolled about the stage, some arm in arm, some busily knitting; they formed into groups of twos and threes and half dozens, from which came the sound of a pleasant chatter, a brisk feminine laughter. I found my way between the lonely-looking stalls, disturbing the housekeeper at her work, and mounted to

the stage. The stalls were covered in their white sheeting; white sheeting hung in long strips from boxes and balcony; here and there a black coat and hat stood out from the dingy monotony of white, or a figure flitted rapidly, a sudden silhouette, against the light of a window high up in the gallery. The T-light flickered unsteadily; a little chill light found its way through roof and windows, intensifying, by even so faint a suggestion of the outside world, all that curious unreality which is never so unreal as at the prosaic moments of a rehearsal.

I had the honour to know a good many ladies of the ballet, and there was no little news, of public and private interest, to be communicated and discussed. Thus I gathered that no one knew anything about the plot of the ballet which was being rehearsed, and that many were uncertain whether it was their fate to be a boy or a girl; that this one was to be a juggler, though she knew not how to juggle; and that one a fisher-boy, and that other a fisher-girl; and that Miss A had been put in a new place, and was disgusted; and Miss B, having also been put in a new place, was delighted; together with much information in no way bearing on the subject of the ballet. All at once the stage-manager clapped his hands; the ladies rushed to their places; I retreated to a corner of the stage, behind the piano, at which sat a pianist and a violinist; and the ballet-master came forward, staff in hand, and took up his position on a large square piece of board, which had been provided for the protection of "the boards" (technically speaking) against the incessant thump-thump of that formidable staff as it pounds away in time with the music. The rehearsal had begun.

Rehearsal costume, to the casual outside spectator, is rather curious. There is a bodice, which may be of any kind; there is a short petticoat, generally of white, with discreet linen drawers to match; the stockings are for the most part black. But a practising dress leaves room, in its many exceptions, for every variety of individual taste. A lively fancy sometimes expends itself on something wonderful in stockings, wonderful coloured things, clocked and patterned. Then there are petticoats plain and ornamented, limp and starched, setting tightly and flapping loosely; petticoats with frillings and edgings, petticoats of blue, of pink, of salmon colour, of bright red. But it is the bodice that gives most scope for the decorative instinct. Many have evidently been designed for the occasion; they are elaborately elegant, showy even. There are prints and stuffs and fancy arrangements in the way of blouses and jerseys and zouaves and Swiss bodices; with white shawls and outdoor jackets for the cold, and ribbons and

bright ties for show. The walking-ladies are in their walking-dresses ; and it is with the oddest effect of contrast that they mingle, marching sedately, in their hats and cloaks, with these skipping figures in the undress of the dancing-school. Those who are not wanted cluster together at the sides, sitting on any available seats and benches, or squatting on the floor ; or they make a dash to the dressing-rooms upstairs or to the canteen downstairs. One industrious lady has brought her knitting. It is stowed away for safety in some unused nook of the piano, which is rattling away by my side ; presently it is hunted out, and I see her absorbed in the attempt to knit without looking at the stitches. Another has brought woolwork, which is getting almost too big to bring ; several have brought books : the works of Miss Braddon, penny novelettes, and, yes, some one has actually brought the " Story of an African Farm." Occasionally a stage-carpenter or scene-shifter or limelight-man passes in the background ; some of the new scenery is lying about, very Chinese in its brilliant red and blue lattice-work. And all the while the whole centre of the stage is in movement ; the lines and circles cross and curve, hands lifted, feet lifted ; and all the while, in time with the music, the ballet-master pounds away with his stout staff, already the worse for wear, and shouts, in every language but English, orders which it is a little difficult to follow.

As the bright, trickling music is beaten out on the perfunctory piano and violin, the composer himself appears, a keen profile rising sharply out of a mountainous furred overcoat. It was just then that the ballet-master had left his place, and was tripping lightly round the stage, taking the place of the absent *première danseuse.* It was only for a moment ; then, after a rush at some misbehaving lady, a tempest of Italian, a growl of good-humoured fury, he was back on his board, and the staff pounded away once more. The *coryphées*, holding bent canes in their hands, turned and twirled in the middle of the stage ; the *corps de ballet*, the children, the extra ladies, formed around them, a semicircle first, then a racing circle ; they passed, re-passed, dissolved, re-formed, bewilderingly ; with disconcerting rushes and dashes ; turning upon themselves, turning round one another, advancing and retreating, in waves of movement, as the music scattered itself in waves of sound. Aimless, unintelligible it looked, this tripping, posturing crowd of oddly-dressed figures ; these bright outdoor faces looked strange in a place where I was so used to see rouged cheeks and lips, powdered chins, painted eye-lashes, yellow wigs. In this fantastic return to nature I found the last charm of the artificial.

III

The front row of the stalls, on a first night, has a character of its own. It is entirely filled by men, and the men who fill it have not come simply from an abstract æsthetic interest in the ballet. They have friends on the other side of the footlights, and their friends on the other side of the footlights will look down, the moment they come on the stage, to see who are in the front row, and who are standing by the bar on either side. The standing-room by the bar is the resource of the first-nighter with friends who cannot get a seat in the front row. On such a night the air is electrical. A running fire of glances crosses and re-crosses, above the indifferent, accustomed heads of the gentlemen of the orchestra; whom it amuses, none the less, to intercept an occasional smile, to trace it home. On the faces of the men in the front row, what difference in expression! Here is the eager, undisguised enthusiasm of the novice, all eyes, and all eyes on one; here is the wary, practised attention of the man who has seen many first nights, and whose scarcely perceptible smile reveals nothing, compromises nobody, rests on all. And there is the shy, self-conscious air of embarrassed absorption, typical of that queer type, the friend who is not a friend of the ballet, and who shrinks somewhat painfully into his seat, as the dancers advance, retreat, turn, and turn again.

Let me recall a first night that I still, I suppose, remember: the first night of "Aladdin." I have had to miss the dress rehearsal, so I am in all the freshness of curiosity as to the dresses, the effects, the general aspect of things. I have been to so many undress rehearsals that I know already most of the music by heart. I know all the dances, I know all the movements of masses. But the ballet, how that will look; but my friends, how they will look; it is these things that are the serious, the important things. And now the baton rises, and the drip, drip of the trickling music dances among the fiddles before the curtain has gone up on the fisherman's hut, and those dancing feet for which I am waiting. Already I see how some of my friends are going to look; and I remember now the musical phrase which I came to associate with that fisher dress, the passing of those slim figures. The Princess flashes upon us in a vision, twining mysteriously in what was then the fashion of the moment, the serpentine dance; and this dance transforms, by what she adds and by what she omits, a series of decorative poses into a real dance, for it is the incomparable Legnani. Then the fisherman's hut, and all mortal things, vanish suddenly; and Aladdin comes down into a vast cave of

livid green, set with stalactites, and peopled with brown demons, winged and crowned with fire; reminding one of the scene where Orfeo, in the opera of Gluck, goes down into hell. Robed in white, the spirit of the Lamp leads on the *coryphées*, her genii; and they are here, they run forward, they dance in lines and circles, creatures with bat-like wings of pale green, shading into a green so dark as to be almost black. The Princess enters: it is "a wave of the sea" that dances! And then, the scenery turning suddenly over and round, the cave suddenly changes into a palace. There is a dancing march, led by the children, with their toppling helmets, and soon, with banners, fans, gilt staves, a dancing crowd moves and circles, in beautiful white and gold, in purple and yellow, in terra-cotta, in robes that flower into chrysanthemums, and with bent garlands of leaves. I search through this bewildering crowd, finding and losing, losing and finding, the faces for which I search. The Princess is borne on in a palanquin; she descends, runs forward (Simeon Solomon's "Lady in a Chinese Dress"), and in the quaintest little costume, a costume of a willow-pattern plate, does the quaintest little trotting and tripping dance, in what might be the Chinese manner. There is another transformation: a demon forest, with wickedly tangled trees, horrible creatures of the woods, like human artichokes, shimmering green human bats, delightful demons. The Princess, the Magician, Aladdin, meet: the Magician has the enchantment of his art, the Princess the enchantment of her beauty, Aladdin only the enchantment of his love. Spells are woven and broken, to bewitching motion: it is the triumph of love and beauty. There is another transformation: the diamond garden, with its flowers that are jewels, its living flowers. Colours race past, butterflies in pale blue, curious morbid blues, drowsy browns and pale greens, more white and gold, a strange note of abrupt black. The crystal curtain, a veil of diamonds, falls, dividing the stage, a dancing crowd before it and behind it, a rain of crystals around. An electric angel has an apotheosis; and as the curtain falls upon the last grouping, I try, vainly, to see everyone at once, everyone whom I want to see. The whole front row applauds violently; and, if one observed closely, it would be seen that every man, as he applauds, is looking in a different direction.

IV

Why is it that one can see a ballet fifty times, always with the same sense of pleasure, while the most absorbing play becomes a little tedious after the third

time of seeing? For one thing, because the difference between seeing a play and seeing a ballet is just the difference between reading a book and looking at a picture. One returns to a picture as one returns to nature, for a delight which, being purely of the senses, never tires, never distresses, never varies. To read a book, even for the first time, requires a certain effort. The book must indeed be exceptional that can be read three or four times; and no book ever was written that could be read three or four times in succession. A ballet is simply a picture in movement. It is a picture where the imitation of nature is given by nature itself; where the figures of the composition are real, and yet, by a very paradox of travesty, have a delightful, deliberate air of unreality. It is a picture where the colours change, recombine, before one's eyes; where the outlines melt into one another, emerge, and are again lost, in the kaleidoscopic movement of the dance. Here we need tease ourselves with no philosophies, need endeavour to read none of the riddles of existence; may indeed give thanks to be spared for one hour the imbecility of human speech. After the tedium of the theatre, where we are called on to interest ourselves in the improbable fortunes of uninteresting people, how welcome is the relief of a spectacle which professes to be no more than merely beautiful; which gives us, in accomplished dancing, the most beautiful sight that we can see; which provides, in short, the one escape into fairy-land which is permitted by that tyranny of the real which is the worst tyranny of modern life.

And then there is another reason why one can see a ballet fifty times, a reason which is not in the least an æsthetic one, but on the contrary very human. I once took a well-known writer, who is one of the most remarkable women of our time, to see a ballet. She had never seen one, and I was delighted with her intense absorption in what was passing before her eyes. At last I said something about the beauty of a certain line of dancers, some effect of colour and order. She turned on me a half-laughing face: "But it is the *people* I am looking at," she said, "not the artistic effect!" Since then I have had the courage to admit that with me too it is the people, and not only the artistic effect, that I like to look at.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

EASTERN DANCERS

EYES ravished with rapture, celestially panting, what passionate spirits aflaming with fire
Drink deep of the hush of the hyacinth heavens that glimmer around them in fountains of light?
O wild and entrancing the strain of keen music that cleaveth the stars like a wail of desire,
And beautiful dancers with Houri-like faces bewitch the voluptuous watches of Night.

The scents of red roses and sandalwood flutter and die in the maze of their gem-tangled hair,
And smiles are entwining like magical serpents the poppies of lips that are opiate-sweet,
Their glittering garments of purple are burning like tremulous dawns in the quivering air,
And exquisite, subtle and slow are the tinkle and tread of their rhythmical slumber-soft feet.

Now silent, now singing and swaying and swinging, like blossoms that bend to the breezes or showers,
Now wantonly winding, they flash, now they falter, and lingering languish in radiant choir,
Their jewel-bright arms and warm, wavering, lily-long fingers enchant thro' the summer-swift hours,
Eyes ravished with rapture, celestially panting, their passionate spirits aflaming with fire.

SAROJINI CHATTOPÂDHYÂY.

A LITERARY CAUSERIE

ON EDMOND DE GONCOURT

MY first visit to Edmond de Goncourt was in May, 1892. I remember my immense curiosity about that "House Beautiful," at Auteuil, of which I had heard so much, and my excitement as I rang the bell, and was shown at once into the garden, where Goncourt was just saying good-bye to some friends. He was carelessly dressed, without a collar, and with the usual loosely-knotted large white scarf rolled round his neck. He was wearing a straw hat, and it was only afterwards that I could see the fine sweep of the white hair, falling across the forehead. I thought him the most distinguished-looking man of letters I had ever seen; for he had at once the distinction of race, of fine breeding, and of that delicate artistic genius which, with him, was so intimately a part of things beautiful and distinguished. He had the eyes of an old eagle; a general air of dignified collectedness; a rare, and a rarely charming, smile, which came out, like a ray of sunshine, in the instinctive pleasure of having said a witty or graceful thing to which one's response had been immediate. When he took me indoors, into that house which was a museum, I noticed the delicacy of his hands, and the tenderness with which he handled his treasures, touching them as if he loved them, with little, unconscious murmurs: "Quel goût; quel goût!" These rose-coloured rooms, with their embroidered ceilings, were filled with cabinets of beautiful things, Japanese carvings, and prints (the miraculous "Plongeuses"!), always in perfect condition ("Je cherche le beau"); albums had been made for him in Japan, and in these he inserted prints, mounting others upon silver and gold paper, which formed a sort of frame. He showed me his eighteenth century designs, among which I remember his pointing out one (a Chardin, I think) as the first he had ever bought; he had been sixteen at the time, and he bought it for twelve francs.

When we came to the study, the room in which he worked, he showed me all his own first editions, carefully bound, and first editions of Flaubert,

Baudelaire, Gautier, with those, less interesting to me, of the men of later generations. He spoke of himself and his brother with a serene pride, which seemed to me perfectly dignified and appropriate; and I remember his speaking (with a parenthetic disdain of the "brouillard scandinave," in which it seemed to him that France was trying to envelop herself; at the best it would be but "un mauvais brouillard") of the endeavour which he and his brother had made to represent the only thing worth representing, "la vie vécue, la vraie verité." As in painting, he said, all depends on the way of seeing, "l'optique": out of twenty-four men who will describe what they have all seen, it is only the twenty-fourth who will find the right way of expressing it. "There is a true thing I have said in my journal," he went on. "The thing is, to find a lorgnette" (and he put up his hands to his eyes, adjusting them carefully), "through which to see things. My brother and I invented a lorgnette, and the young men have taken it from us."

How true that is, and how significantly it states just what is most essential in the work of the Goncourts! It is a new way of seeing, literally a new way of seeing, which they have invented; and it is in the invention of this that they have invented that "new language" of which purists have so long, so vainly, and so thanklessly, complained. You remember that saying of Masson, the mask of Gautier, in "Charles Demailly": "I am a man for whom the visible world exists." Well, that is true, also, of the Goncourts; but in a different way. As I once wrote, and I cannot improve upon what I said then: "The Goncourts' vision of reality might almost be called an exaggerated sense of the truth of things; such a sense as diseased nerves inflict upon one, sharpening the acuteness of every sensation; or somewhat such a sense as one derives from haschisch, which simply intensifies, yet in a veiled and fragrant way, the charm or the disagreeableness of outward things, the notion of time, the notion of space. Compare the descriptions, which form so large a part of their work, with those of Théophile Gautier, who may reasonably be said to have introduced the practice of eloquent writing about places, and also the exact description of them. Gautier describes miraculously, but it is, after all, the ordinary observation carried to perfection, or, rather, the ordinary pictorial observation. The Goncourts only tell you the things that Gautier leaves out; they find new, fantastic, points of view, discover secrets in things, curiosities of beauty, often acute, distressing, in the aspects of quite ordinary places. They see things as an artist, an ultra-subtle artist of the impressionist kind, might see them; seeing them, indeed, always very consciously, with a deliberate attempt upon them, in just that partial, selecting, creative way in

which an artist looks at things for the purpose of painting a picture. In order to arrive at their effects, they shrink from no sacrifice, from no excess; slang, neologism, archaism, forced construction, barbarous epithet, nothing comes amiss to them, so long as it tends to render a sensation. Their unique care is that the phrase should live, should palpitate, should be alert, exactly expressive, super-subtle in expression; and they prefer indeed a certain perversity in their relations with language, which they would have not merely a passionate and sensuous thing, but complex with all the curiosities of a delicately depraved instinct."

"The delicacies of fine literature," that phrase of Pater always comes into my mind when I think of the Goncourts; and indeed Pater seems to me the only English writer who has ever handled language at all in their manner or spirit. I frequently heard Pater refer to certain of their books, to "Madame Gervaisais," to "L'Art du XVIII^e^ Siècle," to "Chérie"; with a passing objection to what he called the "immodesty" of this last book, and a strong emphasis in the assertion that "that was how it seemed to him a book should be written." I repeated this once to Goncourt, trying to give him some idea of what Pater's work was like; and he lamented that his ignorance of English prevented him from what he instinctively realized would be so intimate an enjoyment. Pater was of course far more scrupulous, more limited, in his choice of epithet, less feverish in his variations of cadence; and naturally so, for he dealt with another subject-matter and was careful of another kind of truth. But with both there was that passionately intent pre-occupation with "the delicacies of fine literature"; both achieved a style of the most personal sincerity: "tout grand écrivain de tout les temps," said Goncourt, "ne se reconnaît absolument qu'à cela, c'est qu'il a une langue personnelle, une langue dont chaque page, chaque ligne, est signée, pour le lecteur lettré, comme si son nom était au bas de cette page, de cette ligne": and this style, in both, was accused, by the "literary" criticism of its generation, of being insincere, artificial, and therefore reprehensible.

I have no intention, now, of discussing the place of the Goncourts in literature, or of analyzing the various characteristics of their work. That I shall hope to do some other time, in a more elaborate study than I can write just at present. Let me state only my own conviction, that their work is more worthy of the attention of those who care, not merely for the "delicacies," but for all the subtler qualities, of fine literature, than that of any contemporary writer of French prose.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

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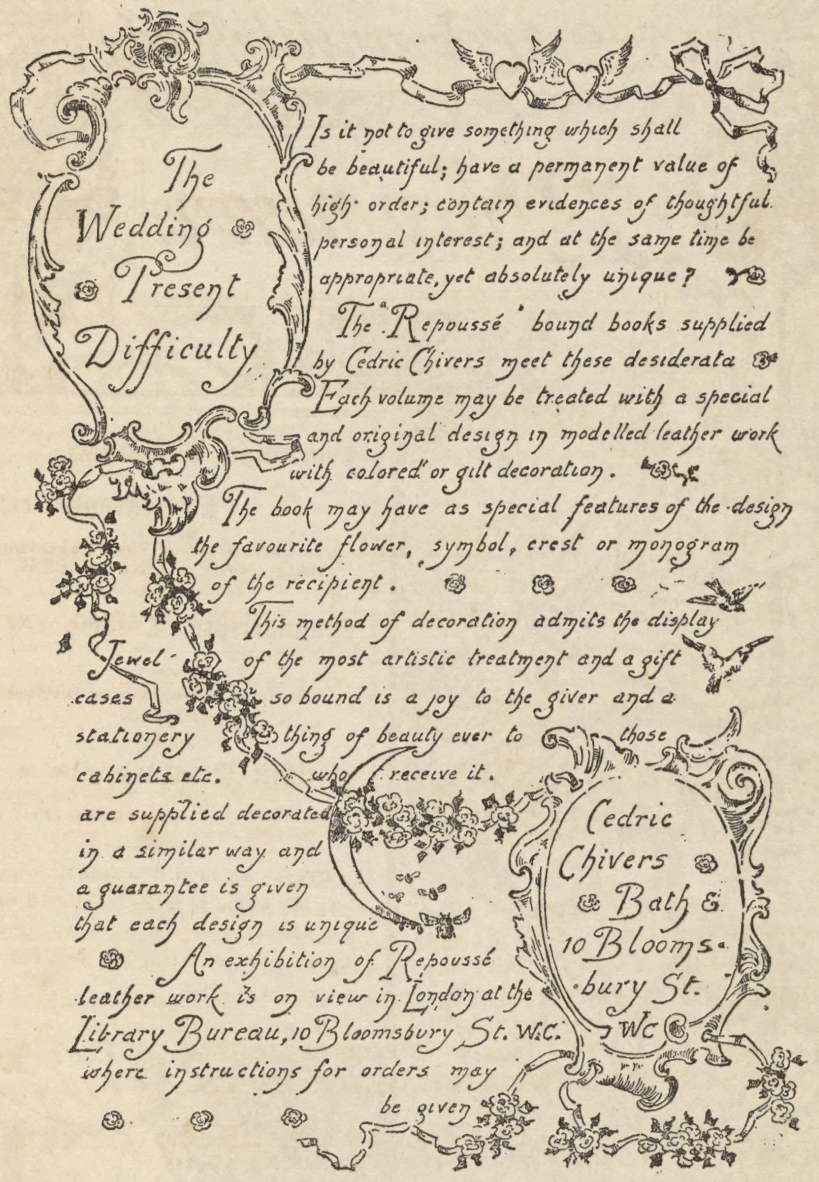
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